

**THE UNIVERSITY TRIBUNAL  
THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO**

**IN THE MATTER OF** charges of academic dishonesty filed on February 20, 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 -**

**J ■ L ■■■■■**

**REASONS FOR DECISION**

**Hearing Date:** September 24, 2025, via Zoom

**Panel Members:**

Michelle S. Henry, Chair

Professor Michael Saini, Faculty Panel Member

Victoria ZhangLiu, Student Panel Member

**Appearances:**

Ryan Shah, Discipline Counsel, Paliare Roland Rosenberg Rothstein LLP

Hillson Tse, Counsel to the Student, RGZ Law

**Hearing Secretary:**

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

**In Attendance:**

**J ■ L ■■■■■**

1. A hearing of the Trial Division of the University Tribunal convened on September 24, 2025, to consider academic charges brought by the University of Toronto (the “University”) against J ■ L ■■■■■ (the “Student”) under the *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters, 2019* (the “Code”). At all material times, the Student was a student at the University of Toronto Mississauga (“UTM”).

2. This hearing arises out of charges of academic misconduct filed by the Provost on February 20, 2025 (the “Charges”).

### **THE CHARGES**

3. The University brought the following Charges against the Student:

- (a) On or about October 25, 2024, the Student knowingly represented as his own an idea or expression of an idea or work of another in the Student’s assembly project in CSC258H5F (the “Course”), contrary to section B.I.1(d) of the Code.
- (b) In the alternative, on or about October 25, 2024, the Student knowingly used or possessed an unauthorized aid or aids or obtained unauthorized assistance in connection with the Student’s assembly project in the Course, contrary to section B.I.1(b) of the Code.
- (c) In the further alternative, on or about October 25, 2024, the Student 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 Student’s assembly project in the Course, contrary to section B.I.3(b) of the Code.

## **AGREED STATEMENT OF FACTS REGARDING SANCTION**

4. The hearing proceeded by way of an Agreed Statement of Facts (“ASF”) in respect of the offence. The following is an abridged version of the ASF.
5. The Student enrolled in CSC258H5F: Computer Organization in Fall 2024 (the “2024 Course”).
6. Students in the 2024 Course were required to submit a coding assignment called the assembly project for credit. The assembly project was worth 20% of the final grade in the 2024 Course. The assembly project required students to program a playable version of the puzzle video game “Sokoban.”
7. In October 2024, the Student contacted a third party (the “Third Party”) via the internet and requested that the Third Party complete the Student’s assembly project on the Student’s behalf. In consideration for the Third Party completing the Student’s assembly project, the Student paid the Third Party \$300.
8. The Third Party wrote the Student’s assembly project by copying significant portions from a version of the assembly project that was posted online by O.E. (the “OE Project”), a student that was formerly enrolled in CSC258H5F: Computer Organization in Fall 2023 (the “2023 Course”).
9. The Third Party provided the Student with a copy of the assembly project prepared by the Third Party, and, on October 25, 2024, the Student submitted this assembly project in the 2024 Course (the “Student Project”).

10. The 2024 Course instructor submitted the Student Project to the MOSS program, an application that determines the level of similarity between computer programs' codes. The 2024 Course instructor reviewed the report generated by the MOSS program, as well as the Student Project and the OE Project, and found that substantial portions of the Student Project were taken verbatim or near verbatim from the OE Project. Additionally, the 2024 Course instructor noted that the Student Project and the OE Project contained several terms and concepts in common, which were inapplicable to the Fall 2024 version of the assembly project and were applicable only to the Fall 2023 version of the assembly project.

11. As a result of these unusual similarities between the Student Project and the OE Project, the 2024 Course instructor concluded that the Student had committed plagiarism on the Student Project (the "Allegation"). On November 19, 2024, the Student met with the 2024 Course instructor to discuss the Allegation.

12. On November 28, 2024, the Student met with the Dean's Designate to discuss the Allegation. In this meeting, the Student stated that he paid the Third Party \$300 to complete the Student Project on the Student's behalf. The Student also acknowledged that it appeared that the Third Party completed the Student Project by copying assembly project code submitted by a student in the 2023 Course. The Student admitted to committing an academic offence in connection with the Student Project.

13. As part of the ASF, the Student admitted that he paid the Third Party \$300 to complete the Student Project. He admitted that he submitted the Student Project,

(a) to obtain academic credit in the 2024 Course;

- (b) knowing that it contained ideas, expressions of ideas, and work that was not his own, but were the ideas, expressions of ideas, and work of the Third Party and O.E.;
- (c) knowing that he did not properly reference the ideas, expressions of ideas, and work that he drew from the Third Party and O.E.;
- (d) with the intention that the University of Toronto rely on the Student Project as containing the Student's own ideas and work in considering the appropriate academic credit to be assigned to the Student Project; and
- (e) in an attempt to obtain an academic advantage on the Student Project.

14. The Student confirmed and admitted that the explanation that he provided at his Dean's meeting, being that he paid the Third Party \$300 to complete the Student Project.

#### **FINDINGS ON CHARGES**

15. Following deliberations and based on the ASF, the Panel concluded that the first charge was proven on a balance of probabilities. The Panel accepted the guilty plea of the Student in respect of the first charge.

16. The Panel was advised that if it returned a conviction on the first charge, the University would withdraw the remaining two charges. Accordingly, the Panel made no findings with respect to the second charge and third charge and treated these two charges as withdrawn.

## **PENALTY**

### **A. Partial Agreed Statement of Facts Re Sanction**

17. The University and the Student submitted a Partial Agreed Statement of Facts Re Sanction, which included information regarding two prior offences committed by the Student.

18. The first offence occurred in the 2020/2021 academic year. The Student was enrolled in MAT133Y5Y: Mathematical and Computational Sciences (“MAT133”). On April 16, 2021, the Student committed an academic offence under s. B.I.1(b) of the *Code* in connection with the final exam in MAT133 by obtaining unauthorized assistance. The Student admitted to the offence and agreed to waive his right to a meeting with the Dean’s Designate. As a penalty for this offence, the Student received a final grade of zero on the final exam in MAT133 and a 12-month annotation referencing the offence on his academic record and transcript.

19. The second offence occurred in the Summer of 2024. On August 7, 2024, the Student committed another academic offence in connection with an assignment in CSC148H5Y: Mathematical and Computational Sciences (“CSC148”). Specifically, the Student had submitted the same work in two courses without the permission of the instructor to whom it was submitted, in connection with the Assignment in CSC148.

20. The Student admitted this offence at the meeting with the Dean’s Designate. As a penalty for this offence, the Student received a final grade of zero in CSC148; a suspension from May 1, 2025, to August 31, 2025; and a 24-month annotation referencing the offence on his academic record and transcript.

**B. The Student's Evidence**

21. The Student testified on his own behalf. The Student testified that he completed his high school in Morocco, and came to the University in September 2020. Notably, this was in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic when everything in the Greater Toronto Area was closed. His parents remained in Morocco.

22. The Student testified that he began using cannabis when he returned to the University in September 2022. His cannabis use became more frequent, and he started consuming nearly two grams of cannabis daily. He stated that his rationale for using cannabis was that his classes were becoming more difficult, and using cannabis helped him get away from the stress. He testified that he felt calmer and more able to think at first, and then his feelings turned to laziness and being numb to everything. He stated that he did not advise his parents of his academic difficulties at the time.

23. The Student testified that he advised his family of his cannabis use and academic difficulties in December 2024 when he was in Morocco. He remained in Morocco in January 2025 as he was on an academic suspension for low grades. Since then, he has worked with his father, attended a data science bootcamp, and been pursuing and developing his own project.

24. He testified that he recognized that there were no excuses for the mistakes he made, stated he would not make these mistakes again, and that he had taken all the help he could get. He apologized to the University and his classmates for his actions.

25. The Student's father also testified about the Student, his shock from finding out about the offence, and the personal family issues that were going on at the time, including his divorce from the Student's mother.

26. The Student also relied on the testimony of Dr. Imane Kendili, a Psychiatrist and Addiction Specialist, in support of his case. He also submitted a “Medical Report for Administrative Use” authored by Dr. Kendili, dated July 14, 2025 (“Medical Report”). Dr. Kendili was not available at the commencement of the Hearing owing to a work conflict. When Dr. Kendili was able to connect remotely to the Hearing, the Student had already concluded the presentation of his case. Nevertheless, the Panel permitted the evidence to be entered into the record and allowed the University to state its objections regarding the admissibility of Dr. Kendili’s oral evidence and the Medical Report. The Panel’s determination on the admissibility of this evidence is addressed below.

27. Dr. Kendili provided evidence regarding the treatment of the Student by her team for a major depressive disorder with anxious distress, complicated by comorbid substance use disorder (cannabis), emotional dysregulation, and marked neurocognitive dysfunction.

28. In the Medical Report, among other things, she stated that the Student consumed nearly two grams of cannabis daily for two years, a pattern of use that has significantly impaired his cognitive functions, particularly attention, working memory, and executive functioning. She opined that chronic exposure to THC also compromised his decision-making abilities and judgment, manifesting in increased impulsivity, difficulty assessing risks, and reduced capacity for adaptive problem-solving. She stated that these deficits contribute to the persistence of the Student’s depressive symptoms and hinder his psychosocial functioning, necessitating a comprehensive therapeutic approach targeting both his mood disorder and cognitive rehabilitation.

29. The Medical Report included her assessment of the Student’s current presentation, his clinical profile, and his prognosis. Dr. Kendili stated that a direct link is established between the

deterioration of the Student's mental state and his academic difficulties: reduced motivation, impaired ability to organize tasks, and social withdrawal have significantly hindered his academic progress.

30. Notably, Dr. Kendili acknowledged that she and her team never assessed the Student while he was attending classes at the University and never assessed him before January 2025.

### **C. Admissibility of the Medical Evidence**

31. The University Tribunal *Rules of Practice and Procedure* (the "Rules") contain the following relevant provisions.

72. Every party shall provide to every other party, not later than 10 days before the hearing on the merits of a proceeding,

- (a) a list of the expert or medical witnesses that the person intends to call;
- (b) a copy of the curriculum vitae of every expert or medical witness included in the list mentioned in above;
- (c) a summary of the anticipated oral evidence of every expert or medical witness included in the list mentioned above;
- (d) a copy of the written report of every expert witness included in the list mentioned above, and any medical documents, if the person intends to rely on the written report or document in the hearing; and
- (e) a copy of any affidavits proposed to be tendered in evidence pursuant to Rule 62.

73. A summary of the oral evidence of an expert or medical witness shall be in writing and shall contain,

- (a) the substance of the evidence of the expert or medical witness;
- (b) a list of documents or things, if any, to which the expert or medical witness will refer; and
- (c) the expert or medical witness's name and address.

74. Evidence that is not disclosed as required under in this rule may not be introduced as evidence in a proceeding, except with leave of the panel.

32. The University also relied on Case 1598 to support its objection to the admission of the medical evidence. In that case, three days of hearing were noted in the decision. On the first day of the hearing, the student sought to introduce medical evidence relating to his mental health. The Panel ordered that if the student intended to rely on the medical evidence, the student was required to comply with the *Rules*. The student failed to do so on the following hearing date, which was more than two months later, and simply provided three medical notes to Discipline Counsel. The Panel refused to admit the medical evidence on the basis that the student had failed to comply with the requirements of the *Rules* or the Order of the Panel. In the alternative, the Panel concluded that the three medical notes that the student sought to admit as medical evidence were inadmissible as hearsay, and there would be serious prejudice were the Panel to admit the three notes into evidence, given that none of the authors of the notes or their curricula vitae were available at the hearing.

33. Having regard to Rules 72 and 73 of the *Rules*, the Panel finds that the Student did not comply with the *Rules*. The Student failed to provide either Dr. Kendili's curriculum vitae or the Medical Report at least 10 days prior to the hearing, as required. Given the date indicated on the Medical Report of July 14, 2025, it was available well in advance of the hearing, and could have been disclosed in accordance with the *Rules*. The Student did not provide a valid reason for his failure to comply with the requirements set out in the *Rules*.

34. Nevertheless, considering that Dr. Kendili was available to testify, provided *viva voce* evidence regarding her educational background and qualifications, and the University had a full opportunity to cross-examine Dr. Kendili, the Panel granted leave to hear the medical evidence and admitted the Medical Report into evidence pursuant to Rule 74.

35. With respect to the weight to be given to the evidence, having heard the testimony and reviewed the Medical Report, the Panel agrees with the University that no weight can be given to the medical evidence for the following reasons.

- (a) The medical assessments conducted to inform the Medical Report were conducted well after the offence. This timing is relevant to the assessment of the evidentiary value of the Medical Report, as the circumstances and the Student's condition at the time of the offence were not contemporaneously evaluated.
- (b) Most observations and findings referenced in the letter came from another medical professional rather than from Dr. Kendili's direct assessment. As such, much of the content within the Medical Report was not based on Dr. Kendili's own clinical observations or independent evaluation of the Student, but instead she relied on information documented by a different practitioner.
- (c) There was no evidence establishing that the Student was experiencing addiction or anxiety when the offence was committed. The Medical Report and supporting testimony did not provide contemporaneous observations or findings with respect to the Student's condition during the period in question. As a result, there was no substantiated basis to conclude that addiction or anxiety influenced the Student's actions at the time of the offence.
- (d) The Panel considered the potential impact of cannabis use on the Student's academic performance and conduct. However, the evidence presented did not establish cannabis use as a justification for the Student's misconduct. Specifically, there was no documentation or testimony provided that directly linked the incident

of academic misconduct to the Student's cannabis use. Further, no evidence was submitted to suggest that cannabis use increases the likelihood of engaging in unethical behaviours within an academic context.

- (e) Dr. Kendili's evidence addressed the potential role cannabis use might play in academic challenges, noting the ways in which cannabis use could affect a student's academic outcomes. She discussed possible impacts on academic performance that may result from cannabis consumption. However, her testimony did not include a direct evidence or conclusion that the Student's cannabis use was causally related to, or responsible for, the specific offence.
- (f) For medical evidence to be considered as a mitigating factor, it is necessary for the Student to demonstrate a clear connection—or nexus—between the stated medical illness and the specific offence under review. In this case, the Panel examined the evidence presented by Dr. Kendili. However, the Panel found that there was no direct or substantiated link established between the medical illness described in Dr. Kendili's report and the offence committed by the Student.
- (g) Without this nexus, the medical evidence cannot be afforded any meaningful weight in the Panel's deliberations. The absence of a direct connection means that the medical information provided does not explain or mitigate the circumstances surrounding the Student's misconduct.

36. The absence of any demonstrated connection between cannabis use and the misconduct means that the medical evidence provided does not explain, excuse, or lessen the seriousness of the Student's actions. Having regard to the above, the Panel concluded that it could not consider

the medical evidence and the Student's cannabis use as a mitigating factor. The Panel is unable to consider the medical illness as a relevant factor influencing the actions leading to the offence.

***D. Reasons for Decision on Penalty***

37. The Student requested a three-year suspension and requested that the Panel backdate the suspension to when he stopped attending school. The Student relied on two cases to support his request. In Case 1106, the student was charged with academic dishonesty related to a final exam in a calculus course. The charges were brought by the University in October 2020, which included representing another's work as his own, obtaining unauthorized assistance, and engaging in academic misconduct during the exam. The student did not attend the hearing. The evidence presented included a report from Chegg.com, indicating the student accessed solutions from the site during the exam.

38. In that case, the University submitted evidence that the student had committed two prior offences, both of which were for submitting plagiarised materials in assignments. The Tribunal found the student guilty of the charges, specifically for using Chegg.com to obtain answers, which he submitted as his own work. The Tribunal agreed with the University's recommendations and imposed sanctions of a zero grade in the course, a four-year suspension, and a notation on the student's transcript.

39. In Case 809, also submitted by the Student's Counsel, the student was charged with submitting plagiarized coursework, which he had purchased from a commercial provider of academic essays. The Student was not present at the hearing. Unlike the case before this Panel, the student in Case 809 had no prior academic offences, and the Panel noted that the entire essay may not have been purchased. The Tribunal agreed with the University's recommendation and imposed

a zero grade in the course; a three-year suspension; a four-year notation on the Student's academic record and transcript.

40. The University submitted that the Panel should impose the following sanctions on the Student.

- (a) A recommendation to the President of the University that the President recommend to the Governing Council that the Student be expelled from the University.
- (b) The Student shall be immediately suspended from the University for a period of up to five years from the date of this 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.
- (c) The Student shall receive a final grade of zero in CSC258H5F in Fall 2024; and
- (d) This case shall 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.

41. The University provided a sanctions chart with eight cases regarding the appropriate sanction. The cases provided all dealt with purchased work, paid personation, or plagiarism.

42. The University relied on *Discipline Appeals Board and S.C., N.H., & M.K.* (November 23, 2011), which was an appeal of the Tribunal's decision in *University of Toronto and S.C., N.H., & M.K.* (Case Nos. 596, 597 & 598, November 10, 2010). The case involved an appeal by the Provost against the penalty imposed on three students, Ms. C, Ms. K, and Ms. H, for academic dishonesty.

The students had pleaded guilty to plagiarism by purchasing essays and submitting them for academic credit in a course. Two students had previously committed two academic offences, with Ms. H having a third offence. The students expressed remorse and shame during the disciplinary process.

43. The majority of the Tribunal imposed a five-year suspension, emphasizing the students' remorse and the impact of the disciplinary process on them. The dissenting member would have imposed an expulsion, citing the seriousness of purchasing essays and the students' history of offences.

44. At the appeal, the Provost argued that the majority's decision was inconsistent with other cases and minimized the seriousness of the offence. The Provost contended that the students' demeanor and expressions of remorse should not mitigate the penalty.

45. In allowing the appeal, the Appeals Board found errors in the majority's findings and characterization of the evidence. The Appeals Board noted as follows:

“As previous decisions of this Board make clear, purchasing academic work for a fee and then submitted that work with a view to securing academic credit, has always been considered among the very most, to use the majority's description “egregious” offences a student can commit in the University environment.” (para 104)

“[...] expulsion should be considered as a likely, perhaps the most likely sanction in cases of students purchasing and submitting purchased essays as their own work, for academic credit.”

46. The Appeals Board concluded that expulsion was the appropriate penalty, emphasizing the need for deterrence and the seriousness of the offence. The Appeals Board set aside the five-year suspension and recommended expulsion.

47. In another case, *University of Toronto and A.T.* (Case No. 645, May 20, 2011), the student was also found guilty of purchasing an essay. At the time, the student had one prior offence of plagiarism. In imposing a sanction of expulsion and zero in the course, the Tribunal stated that it was left with some uncertainty as to whether there was a likelihood of a repetition of the offence in light of the fact that the second offence was committed not long after the first offence and while the notation in respect of the first offence was still on the student's transcript. The Tribunal stated at paragraph 31:

There is an overwhelming need to impose sanctions that, not only reflect the seriousness of the offence, but also provide general deterrence. Although it is difficult to assess whether imposing a penalty of expulsion (which is the most severe sanction possible) will actually deter others, it is one of the only ways that the University can demonstrate its views of the seriousness of this kind of offence.

48. In *University of Toronto and J.W.* (Case No. 1082, August 23, 2019), the student had purchased an essay, and had one concurrent offence of plagiarism. In recommending that an expulsion be imposed and making an order of zero in the course, the Tribunal noted that a review of cases dealing with purchased essays indicated that "prior offences are typically considered an aggravating factor that tips the scale in favour of expulsion in cases of this nature" (at paragraph 23).

49. In *University of Toronto and Y.Z.*, (Case No.1588, January 10, 2025), the student was found guilty of an academic offence for purchasing an essay. The student in that case had one prior offence of using an unauthorized aid. The student in that case admitted to the offence, but did not present an agreed statement of facts. The Tribunal in that case recommended expulsion and ordered a zero in the course. The facts in the case law presented by the University that resulted in an expulsion are consistent with the current offence. As with this case, all involved a purchase of

academic work and at least one prior or concurrent offence. We agree with the comments made in those prior cases regarding both the seriousness of the offence and the fact that prior offences are an aggravating factor that tips the scale in favour of expulsion.

50. In making its decision the Panel considered the factors set out in the seminal *University of Toronto and Mr. C.* (Case No. 1976/77-3, November 5, 1976) case, namely: 1) the character of person charged; 2) the likelihood of repetition of the offence; 3) the nature of offence committed; 4) any extenuating circumstances surrounding the commission of the offence; 5) detriment to the University occasioned by the offence; and, 6) the need to deter others from committing a similar offence.

51. With respect to character of the person charged, the University acknowledged that the Student admitted to the offences both at his meeting with the Dean's Designate, and before this Tribunal. The Student also participated and cooperated in the academic discipline process, including by entering into the ASF with respect to the offence and a Partial Agreed Statement of Facts regarding sanctions. Counsel to the Student submitted that the Student readily admitted that he paid someone for the service, which would not have been detected but for his admission. The Panel agrees that these facts weigh in favour of the Student's character.

52. Regarding the likelihood of a repetition of the offence, the Student had two prior offences. The University noted that the Student understood that he received a lenient penalty for his prior offences, and took advantage of the degree of leniency, which was a serious aggravating factor. Further, less than a month after meeting with the Dean's Designate in respect of the second offence, the student paid the Third Party to complete the Assembly Project. The Panel agrees. Having

regard to these facts, there is no basis to conclude that the Student is unlikely to commit another offence.

53. With respect to the nature of the offence, the detriment to the University, and the need to deter others, as the University noted, this Tribunal has held that purchasing academic work is considered one of the most egregious offences. Purchased academic work involves intention, planning, and deliberation to enter a transaction. Further, it introduces a commercial element. The act of having someone surreptitiously complete your assignment is something that is difficult to detect and undermines the fundamental principles of fairness and honesty that the University upholds. Such conduct negatively impacts the University's reputation and the integrity of its academic programs. Consequently, the University must send a strong message to reinforce the importance of academic integrity and discourage future violations.

54. With respect to extenuating circumstances, Counsel to the Student noted that the Student has had some struggles, but his actions following the offence demonstrate that he has taken steps to improve himself. He stressed the family issues, mental health issues, and significant drug addiction issues as mitigating factors. As noted above, given the deficiencies in the medical evidence that the Student sought to rely on, the evidence cannot be considered as a mitigating factor.

55. Having regard to the evidence and based on the similar cases presented by the University, the Panel agreed that the sanctions sought by the University were appropriate in the circumstances and therefore imposed the following sanctions on the Student:

- (a) a recommendation to the President of the University that the President recommend to the Governing Council that the Student be expelled from the University;

- (b) an immediate suspension from the University for a period of up to five years from the date of this 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; and,
- (c) a final grade of zero in CSC258H5F in Fall 2024.

56. This case shall 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.

57. An Order was signed after the hearing on September 24, 2025, by the Panel to this effect.

DATED at Toronto, December 19, 2025.

Original signed by:

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Michelle S. Henry, Chair  
On behalf of the Panel