

**THE UNIVERSITY TRIBUNAL
THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO**

IN THE MATTER OF charges of academic dishonesty filed on January 30 & April 10, 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 -

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REASONS FOR DECISION

Date of Hearing: January 8, 2026, via Zoom

Members of the Panel:

Michael Hines, Chair
Professor Manfred Schneider, Faculty Panel Member
Jennifer Wu, Student Panel Member

Appearances:

William Webb, Discipline Counsel, Paliare Roland Rosenberg Rothstein LLP

Hearing Secretary:

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

In Attendance:

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Charges and Hearing

1. This panel of the University Tribunal held a hearing on January 8, 2026, to consider charges brought by the University of Toronto against J■■■ Z■■■ ("the Student") under the *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters, 2019* (the "Code").

Procedural Issues

2. The Student was charged with the Offences set out in paragraphs 5 and 6, below (the "Charges"). Essentially, they concern two related allegations; first, that the Student obtained unauthorized assistance in connection with the final exam in MAT246H1: Concepts in Abstract Mathematics ("MAT246") through communications during the exam with an outside source, and second, that the Student obtained unauthorized assistance in connection with Term Test 2 in MAT246. The first set of charges shall be referred to below as the "MAT246 Final Exam Charges", while the second set of charges shall be referred to as the "MAT246 Term Test 2 Charges".
3. As the Student was aware well prior to this hearing, the University had charged several students with the same or similar types of misconduct in relation to academic work in MAT246H1 and/or MAT235Y1 in Winter 2024. Prior to the hearing in this matter, the Student agreed that that this proceeding and one or more other proceedings in relation to academic misconduct in MAT246H1 and/or MAT235Y1 in Winter 2024 might, in whole or in part, be heard one immediately after the other by the same panel, pursuant to Rule 30 of the *Rules of Practice and Procedure*. This, in fact, took place.
4. The Student appeared at the hearing via Zoom. However, no *viva voce* evidence was called. Rather, on the issue of the proof of the Charges, the matter proceeded on an Agreed Statement of Facts ("ASF") that the Student had signed on May 15, 2025. Paragraphs 3 and 4 of that ASF read as follows:
 3. The Office of Appeals, Discipline, and Faculty Grievances sent the Student a letter with information about Downtown Legal Services, the Law Society Referral Service, and the hearing process. The Student has reviewed this letter, the University has given the Student an opportunity to obtain legal advice, and the Student has obtained legal advice about this matter. A copy of the letter from the Office of Appeals, Discipline, and Faculty Grievances to the Student is attached to the ASF at Tab B.
 4. The Student acknowledges that they have received a copy of the charges, waives the reading of the charges, and pleads guilty to all charges.

Charges

5. By letter dated January 30, 2025, the Student was charged with the MAT246 Final Exam Charges as follows:

1. On or about April 26, 2024, you knowingly used or possessed an unauthorized aid or aids or obtained unauthorized assistance in connection with the final exam in MAT246, contrary to section B.I.1(b) of the Code.
 2. In the alternative, on or about April 26, 2024, you knowingly represented as your own an idea or expression of an idea or work of another in connection with the final exam in MAT246, contrary to section B.I.1(d) of the Code.
 3. In the alternative, on or about April 26, 2024, 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 final exam in MAT246, contrary to section B.I.3(b) of the Code.
6. By letter dated April 2025, the Student was charged with the following supplemental charges concerning Term Test 2 for MAT246:
1. On or about March 8, 2024, you knowingly used or possessed an unauthorized aid or aids or obtained unauthorized assistance in connection with term test 2 in MAT246, contrary to section B.I.1(b) of the Code.
 2. In the alternative, on or about March 8, 2024, you knowingly represented as your own an idea or expression of an idea or work of another in connection with term test 2 in MAT246, contrary to section B.I.1(d) of the Code.
 3. In the alternative, on or about March 8, 2024, 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 term test 2 in MAT246, contrary to section B.I.3(b) of the Code.

Evidence and Findings

7. Put briefly, the Charges arose out of the discovery by the University of a sophisticated scheme to cheat on the final exam in MAT246. This discovery then led the University to analyze the results of the MAT246 Term Test 2, which again revealed a scheme of cheating.
8. Given that the discovery of cheating in the MAT246 Final Exam preceded (and led to) the discovery of cheating in the earlier MAT246 Term Test 2, we will describe the events and evidence concerning the Final Exam first.
 - a) **MAT246 Final Exam**
9. The final exam in MAT246 was administered in person on April 26, 2024. It was worth 42% of the final grade in the course. The usual directions and warnings

concerning academic dishonesty had been provided during the course and were repeated on the exam materials.

10. The scheme involved more than a half-dozen students using what the ASF refers to as “spy technology” such as button cameras and concealed smart watches. Through these hard-to-detect devices, the exam participants could communicate exam questions to and receive answers from an unauthorized source evidently located outside of Canada. This scheme was commercial in nature – the involved students paid their source for the information supplied.
11. The department had received information shortly before the writing of the final exam that identified three students, D.H, S.J. and J.Z. (the Student in our case) as possible participants in a cheating scheme. In the course of the MAT246 final exam on April 26, 2024, suspicious behaviours were observed. As stated in paragraph 22 of the ASF:
 22. [X] invigilated the final exam in MAT246. During the first 30 minutes of the final exam, [X] saw J.Z. tilting their exam booklet in front of their chest and flipping through the pages without writing anything. After 30 minutes, [X] saw J.Z. writing vigorously. [X] saw J.Z. wearing a shirt with black buttons that were the same shape and colour as a button camera, but she did not notice any other features of the buttons to indicate that one of them was a camera.
12. The invigilator did not intercede at that time but rather made notes and a report which led to further investigation, as described below. The student “J.Z.” referred to in the quoted paragraph was the Student in the case before us.
13. Following the final exam, a comparison was undertaken concerning the answers of the students who had written the exam. As stated in paragraph 24 of the ASF, this revealed that “that several students (Y.D., S.J., X.L., X.M., J.Z., and S.Z.) wrote answers that had striking similarities to D.H.’s answers, and that it was highly unlikely that the similarities were coincidental.” The exam materials upon which these conclusions were based were filed as exhibits in this Hearing. The student “J.Z.” listed above was, once again, the Student in our case.
14. Based upon the foregoing, allegations were made against several students, including the Student in this case, that they had obtained unauthorized assistance from a third party or a cheating service in connection with the final exam in MAT246.
15. During the dean’s designate meetings, only one of the accused students acknowledged their guilt. The others, including the Student at issue here, denied any wrongdoing. Paragraph 26 of the ASF states:

On June 12, 2024, J.Z. attended a dean’s designate meeting to discuss the MAT246 allegations. At the start of the meeting, Professor Stefana Gargova, a dean’s designate for academic integrity, gave J.Z. the dean’s warning in the Code. During the meeting, J.Z. stated that they copied answers from the student sitting

next to them during the final exam. J.Z. denied obtaining answers from a third party or a cheating service on the final exam in MAT246.

16. As stated, one of the accused students (referred to below as the “Co-operating Student”) admitted their guilt and provided insights as to how the scheme operated. This occurred at a dean’s designate meeting to discuss the allegations that the Co-operating Student had obtained unauthorized assistance from a third party or a cheating service in connection with the final exam in MAT235 and the final exam in MAT246 in Winter 2024.
 17. At the start of that meeting, Professor Graeme Hirst, a dean’s designate for academic integrity, gave the Co-operating Student the dean’s warning in the Code. The Co-operating Student then admitted that they paid a third party for answers to the final exam in MAT235 and the final exam in MAT246. The Co-operating Student explained that the third party told them that other students paid for the service, and that other students sent pictures of each final exam to the third party. The Co-operating Student stated that they had received answers via their smartwatch for the final exam in MAT246 and had received answers via their cellphone for the final exam in MAT235. The Co-operating Student explained that the answers did not come in all at once because the third party needed time to write the answers.
 18. The Panel was provided with a copy of the meeting notes from this meeting.
 19. The Co-operating Student subsequently sent the division pictures of the answers to the final exam in MAT235 and the final exam in MAT246 that they had received from the third party during the final exams. These photographs, coupled with a detailed comparison of the answers submitted by the students under suspicion, assisted the University further in connecting the Student in our case to that scheme.
- b) Term Test 2 in MAT246**
20. Term Test 2 in MAT246 had been administered in person on March 8, 2024. Term Test 2 was worth 20% of the final grade in the course. The front page of Term Test 2 in MAT246 stated that students were not permitted any aids during the term test.
 21. That same day, students in MAT246 submitted their term tests for academic credit. Evidently, no academic misconduct was suspected at the time.
 22. Following the discovery of widespread, organized cheating in the MAT246 Final Exam, the professor in the course reviewed other academic work previously submitted by the suspected students. It was determined that the Student and a number of others had submitted answers to Term Test 2 in MAT246 that had striking similarities. It was then alleged that these students had obtained unauthorized assistance on Term Test 2 in MAT246 from a third-party or a cheating service.

23. On April 1, 2025, ten months after attending the dean's designate meeting concerning the MAT246 final exam described in paragraph 15, above, the Student attended a dean's designate meeting to discuss the MAT246 Term Test 2 allegations. At the start of the meeting, Professor Walid Saleh, a dean's designate for academic integrity, gave the Student the dean's warning in the Code. During the meeting, the Student admitted to committing an academic offence in connection with Term Test 2 in MAT246.
24. As noted at the outset of these Reasons, the Student ultimately signed an ASF on May 15, 2025. Paragraphs 33-36 of the ASF reads as follows:
 33. The Student admits to the following facts in relation to the final exam in MAT246: they used and possessed electronic aids on the final exam; they obtained unauthorized assistance from a third party or a cheating service on the final exam; they paid for the unauthorized assistance on the final exam; they performed no meaningful academic work on the final exam; they knew that they were prohibited from using or possessing an aid or aids or obtaining assistance on the final exam; and they were dishonest about the allegations at their dean's designate meeting.
 34. The Student admits that they knowingly used and possessed unauthorized aids and obtained unauthorized assistance in connection with the final exam in MAT246, contrary to section B.I.1(b) of the Code.
 35. The Student admits to the following facts in relation to term test 2 in MAT246: they used and possessed electronic aids on the term test; they obtained unauthorized assistance from a third party or a cheating service on the term test; they paid for the unauthorized assistance on the term test; they performed no meaningful academic work on the term test; and they knew that they were prohibited from using or possessing an aid or aids or obtaining assistance on the term test.
 36. The Student admits that they knowingly used and possessed unauthorized aids and obtained unauthorized assistance in connection with term test 2 in MAT246, contrary to section B.I.1(b) of the Code.
25. In our hearing, based on this evidence, the Panel found the Student guilty of Charge 1 of the MAT246 Final Exam Charges and Charge 1 of the MAT246 Term Test 2 Charges, as set out in paragraphs 5 and 6, above, namely that the Student knowingly used or possessed an unauthorized aid or aids or obtained unauthorized assistance in connection with both the final exam in MAT246 and Term Test 2 in MAT246, contrary to section B.I.1(b) of the Code.
26. Pursuant to an agreement noted in the ASF, upon the making by the Panel of this finding, the University withdrew the remaining charges.

Sanction

27. The sanction aspect of the hearing was facilitated by the fact that the University and the Student had, prior to the commencement of the hearing, agreed upon a

joint submission on penalty (“JSP”) that would be operative in the event of a finding of misconduct. According to an Agreed Statement of Facts on Penalty, the Student acknowledged that the Provost had advised the Student of their right to obtain legal advice, and that the Student had obtained that advice.

28. It should also be noted that the Student attended the hearing by Zoom. The Student accepted responsibility for their actions, expressed remorse for having committed the academic offences in question and indicated an intention to learn from their mistakes.
29. The Panel was advised that the Student had committed no prior academic offences. The parties also placed on the record an Agreed Statement of Facts on Penalty that stated that the Student had cooperated with the University in the prosecution of other students who were involved in the cheating schemes at issue.
30. The critical contextual factor within which to evaluate the issue of sanction in this case is, of course, the existence of the JSP. We are not asked, in this case, to fashion a remedy that, in the Panel’s opinion, best suits the proven offences. That is not to suggest that the Panel disagrees with the agreed upon penalty. That issue simply does not arise for discussion.
31. Rather, for reasons expressed in many previous cases, the Panel recognizes and respects the deference that is customarily accorded to JSPs (see, for example, *University of Toronto and M.A.* (Case No. 837, December 22, 2016)).
32. Accordingly, for our purposes, it is sufficient for the Panel to determine whether or not the JSP in our case would be contrary to the public interest or would otherwise bring the administration of justice within the University into disrepute.
33. We will shortly return to the application of this principle to the JSP in our case. Before doing so, we will consider the factors that the Tribunal would typically apply to a case such as this in the absence of a JSP. This will assist us in performing our task – determining whether the sanction proposed in the JSP falls, in all of the circumstances, within the parameters outlined immediately above.
34. Apart from the JSP, Discipline Counsel asked the Panel to consider the factors typically reviewed in other, similar cases. Assessing the Student’s conduct in this case against these criteria, we observe:

(a) Character: The Student ultimately acknowledged their wrongdoing and entered into ASFs and a JSP. The Student had no academic record prior to their participation in the two events of cheating described above, assisted in the prosecution of other cases and appeared before us to express regret. However, the Student was involved in (and has now been convicted of) two distinct academic offences and was initially dishonest in refusing to acknowledge the extent of their guilt at the first opportunity to the dean’s designate;

(b) Likelihood of Repetition: Given the evidence of the Student's multiple offences in this case, there is some risk of the same offences currently under review being repeated absent a significant sanction;

(c) Nature of Offence: the deliberate, premeditated reliance on unauthorized forms of assistance in tests and examinations is a very serious offence. It strikes at the heart of the University's core values of honesty and integrity. It has the potential to affect other students adversely by allowing cheaters to obtain grades higher than they actually merit by presenting the knowledge of others as their own. It harms the reputation of the University as a whole. The Code itself makes all this very clear. Consequently, those who commit this offence merit serious sanctions;

(d) Extenuating Circumstances: There is no evidence of any extenuating circumstances in this case;

(e) Detriment to the University: As noted above, offences of the kind committed in this case strike at the heart of the University's core values of honesty and integrity. They cannot be tolerated;

(f) Deterrence: Serious sanctions are required to discourage others from committing similar offences.

35. Discipline Counsel also asked us to bear in mind how similar cases have been dealt with in the past. It was pointed out that in similar cases arising recently, the Tribunal has found that expulsion was an appropriate sanction (see, for example, *University of Toronto and J.M.* (Case No. 1573, October 30, 2024)).
36. Most recently, in *University of Toronto and X.M.* (Case No. 1722, December 29, 2025), arising out of the very same MAT246 commercial cheating scheme that is at issue here, the Panel accepted a sanction that was expressed in precisely the same terms as that proposed in the JSP before us. It should be noted that the student in that case had a prior academic offence on record. At the same time, the student provided an undertaking that they would never re-apply for admission to the University. Because the sanction in that case was arrived at through a JSP, its precedential value is somewhat lessened.
37. As in the case of *X.M.* noted immediately above, the striking features of our case concerning the Student involve the methodology and context within which the offence took place. Specifically, the Student sought to make use of sophisticated "spyware" (an agreed upon term) provided to them as part of trans-national commercial enterprise. This very troubling feature would invite the most severe response from the University.
38. As stated at the outset of this Decision, our case involving the Student. is only one of many cases before the Tribunal arising out of the extensive cheating scheme discovered in the mathematics department in the spring of 2024. It would be analytically possible (some might say tempting), to try to assess with precision the many factors that can vary from student to student and case to case – past

disciplinary record, the number of courses and tests/exams in which the student cheated in 2024, the method(s) used to cheat, cooperation in other prosecutions, the timing and content of any admissions, the presence or absence of an apology and/or an undertaking not to re-apply, and so on.

39. This could lead to an exquisite “titration” of these many cases, with fine distinctions being drawn – perhaps calculated in months rather than years of suspension or notation – in an attempt to make each punishment precisely fit each academic crime.
40. The reality and practicality of the situation dictate a different approach. Any rejection of a JSP, however “justified” by a calculus of the kind described above, would invite an appeal. The costs to the University, both immediate and in the longer term administration of discipline, would be substantial.
41. In view of this, the Panel is comfortable in accepting the mandate described above in the presence of a JSP. We recognize that the sanction proposed in this case, when compared to the same sanction accepted in other, similar cases, may appear more or less harsh. However, in the circumstances of this case, we do not find that the sanction proposed by the parties would be contrary to the public interest, nor would it otherwise bring the administration of justice within the University into disrepute.
42. Accordingly, the terms of the JSP, set out in in paragraph 43, below, are hereby adopted by the Panel as the appropriate penalty in this case.
43. Based upon the foregoing, and after reading the evidence submitted and hearing submissions from Discipline Counsel and the Student, the Tribunal orders that:
 - (a) The Student is guilty of knowingly using and possessing unauthorized aids and obtaining unauthorized assistance in connection with the final exam in MAT246H1, contrary to section B.I.1(b) of the Code;
 - (b) The Student is guilty of knowingly using and possessing unauthorized aids and obtaining unauthorized assistance in connection with term test 2 in MAT246, contrary to section B.I.1(b) of the Code;
 - (c) The following sanctions shall be imposed on the Student:
 - (i) a final grade of zero in MAT246H1 in Winter 2024;
 - (ii) a suspension from the University of Toronto for 5 years to commence on September 1, 2025;
 - (iii) a notation of the sanction on the Student’s academic record and transcript for 6 years from the date of the University Tribunal’s Order; 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.

Dated at Toronto this 18th day of February, 2026.

Original signed by:

Michael Hines, Chair

On Behalf of the Panel