

FOR INFORMATION

OPEN SESSION

TO: Academic Board

SPONSOR: Mr. Christopher Lang, Director, Appeals, Discipline and Faculty Grievances

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PRESENTER: See Sponsor

CONTACT INFO:

DATE: May 18, 2023 for May 25, 2023

AGENDA ITEM: 12(c)

ITEM IDENTIFICATION: University Tribunal, Information Reports, Spring 2023

JURISDICTIONAL INFORMATION:

The University Tribunal hears cases of academic discipline under the *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters, 1995* (the “Code”)¹ which are not disposed of under the terms of the Code by the Division.

Section 5.2.6 (b) of the *Terms of Reference* of the Academic Board provides for the Board to receive for information reports, without names, on the disposition of cases in accordance with the Code.

GOVERNANCE PATH:

1. Academic Board [for information] (May 25, 2023)

PREVIOUS ACTION TAKEN:

The last semi-annual report came to the Academic Board on November 17, 2022.

¹ <http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>

HIGHLIGHTS:

The purpose of the information package is to fulfill the requirements of the University Tribunal and, in so doing, inform the Board of the Tribunal's work and the matters it considers, and the process it follows. It is not intended to create a discussion regarding individual cases, their specifics or the sanctions imposed, as these were dealt with by an adjudicative body with a legally qualified chair, bound by due process and fairness, and based on the record of evidence and submissions put before it by the parties.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

There are no financial implications.

RECOMMENDATION:

For information.

DOCUMENTATION PROVIDED:

- Information Reports of Tribunal Decisions under the *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters, 1995* (Spring 2023)

TRIBUNAL DECISIONS UNDER THE
CODE OF BEHAVIOUR ON ACADEMIC MATTERS
(SPRING 2023)

PLAGIARIZED AN ESSAY

Suspension of four years; notation on the Student's transcript for five years; grade of 0 in the course; publication of the decision with the Student's name withheld

The Student purchased an essay from an online source. The Student pleaded guilty and agreed with the facts and the proposed sanctions. In finding the Student guilty and in imposing the agreed-upon sanctions, the Panel noted the following: there is a high threshold for rejecting a jointly proposed sanction; the proposed sanctions fell within an acceptable range for similar cases; the offence is serious and caused great detriment to the University and its students; there is a strong need to deter others; this type of offence poses a grave threat to the integrity of the University's processes for evaluating students, is profoundly unfair to other students, and jeopardizes the University's reputation; at the time of the offence the Student was experiencing mental health issues as well as several personal and family challenges, some of which were brought on or exacerbated by the COVID pandemic; the Student pleaded guilty early in the process, thus demonstrating insight into her behaviour and remorse for her actions; and the Student had been seeking professional help for her mental health issues and will continue to do so.

PLAGIARIZED ON AN ASSIGNMENT

Suspension of two years; notation on the Student's transcript for three years; grade of 0 in the course; publication of the decision with the Student's name withheld.

The Student plagiarized code on a computer science assignment. In finding the Student guilty and in imposing the sanctions, the Panel noted the following: the Student did not participate so there was no evidence about their character or remorse or their likelihood to reoffend; the offence was serious and deliberate, and caused detriment to the University; general deterrence is an important factor; a strong message must be sent to other students that such misconduct is considered serious; and the sanctions are consistent with other similar cases.

UNAUTHORIZED ASSISTANCE

Suspension of just under four years; a notation on the Student's transcript for just under five years; grade of 0 in the courses; publication of the decision with the Student's name withheld

The Student obtained unauthorized assistance by accessing questions and answers to his exams that were posted on Chegg.com, a subscription-based website. In finding the Student guilty and in imposing the sanctions, the Panel noted the following: the sanctions were consistent with those imposed in similar cases; the Student undermined the grades-based system of evaluation and broke the honour code that is essential to modern learning; online learning provides more opportunities for students to cheat, requiring the University to go to considerable lengths to detect and uncover misconduct; any sanction must denounce cheating and deter others in order to protect the academic integrity of the University; the Student had committed prior academic offences; and by using a subscription-based website, the Student committed a serious form of academic misconduct.

UNAUTHORIZED ASSISTANCE

Suspension of two years and four months; notation on the Student's transcript from date of the order until graduation; grade of 0 in the course; publication of the decision with the Student's name withheld

The Student obtained unauthorized assistance by posting questions to Chegg.com and accessing and using answers to his term test that were posted on Chegg.com. The Student pleaded guilty and agreed with the facts and the proposed sanctions. In finding the Student guilty and in imposing the agreed-upon sanctions, the Panel noted the following: there is a high threshold to reject jointly proposed sanctions; the offence was serious in that the Student knowingly obtained unauthorized assistance and then denied responsibility in the Dean's Designate meeting; the Student eventually cooperated in the process and demonstrated insight and remorse; and the proposed sanctions were consistent with the sanctions in similar cases.

PLAGIARISM

Suspension of two years; notation on the Student's transcript for three years; grade of 0 in the course; publication of the decision with the Student's name withheld.

The Student plagiarized on a problem set by using Chegg.com. In finding the Student guilty and in imposing the sanctions, the Panel noted the following: the Student did not participate in the proceedings so there was no evidence of any mitigating circumstances; plagiarism is a serious offence that requires a strong sanction; the sanctions were consistent with those imposed in similar cases; and the commercial nature of Chegg.com is an aggravating factor.

UNAUTHORIZED ASSISTANCE

Suspension of three years and eight months; notation on the Student's transcript until graduation; grade of 0 in the course; publication of the decision with the Student's name withheld

The Student obtained unauthorized assistance from online sources and an online calculator while writing a term test. The Student pleaded guilty and agreed with the facts and proposed sanctions. In finding the Student guilty and in imposing the agreed-upon sanctions the Panel noted the following: there was a high threshold to reject a jointly proposed sanction; the Student admitted guilt, cooperated and expressed remorse; the Student had two prior offences, and, only two weeks prior to the commission of this offence, it was impressed upon her that there must be no repetition of similar behaviour; the offence is serious; and the sanctions fall within a range supported by other similar cases.

MULTIPLE PLAGIARISMS

Suspension of three years and eight months; notation on the Student's transcript for five years; grade of 0 in the courses; publication of the decision with the Student's name withheld

The Student copied from online sources during two mid-term tests and on a final examination. The Student pleaded guilty and agreed with the facts and proposed sanctions. In finding the Student guilty and in imposing the agreed-upon sanctions, the Panel noted the following: the Panel had no concern that accepting the jointly proposed sanctions would bring the administration of justice into disrepute; the offences are serious and cause great detriment to the University and its students; the plagiarism was deliberate and extensive; there is a strong need to deter others; the Student had a prior plagiarism offence, and the latter offences took place after the Student had received a warning in respect of the first offence; the Student accepted responsibility and demonstrated insight into her behaviour by pleading guilty early in the process; the Student expressed regret and remorse for her actions; at the time the offences were committed the Student was experiencing personal difficulties due to the COVID pandemic, including mental health issues; the Student has been seeking help for her mental health issues; and the proposed sanctions were consistent with the sanctions imposed in similar cases.

UNAUTHORIZED ASSISTANCE AND PLAGIARISM

Suspension of two years; a notation on the Student's transcript for three years; grade of 0 in the course; publication of the decision with the Student's name withheld.

The Student obtained unauthorized assistance and plagiarized on an assignment. In finding the Student guilty and in imposing the sanctions, the Panel noted the following: the offences were serious; there was no evidence of mitigating or aggravating factors as the Student did not participate; there was a need for deterrence as these offences undermine the foundation of academic integrity and result in unfairness to students who work diligently and independently to earn their credits; these offences can undermine the credibility of the institution and the degrees it confers; and the sanctions were consistent with those imposed in similar cases.

PERSONATION

Suspension of five years; a notation on the Student's transcript for five years; grade of 0 in the course; publication of the decision with the Student's name withheld.

The Student paid someone to write a mid-term examination. The Student pleaded guilty and agreed with the facts as well as with the proposed sanctions. In accepting the Student's guilty plea and in imposing the agreed-upon sanctions, the Panel noted the following: the offence was serious and paying someone increases the seriousness of the offence; the Student admitted guilt early and cooperated during the process; the agreed-upon sanctions were neither unreasonable nor unconscionable; and the sanctions were consistent with those imposed on similar cases.

UNAUTHORIZED ASSISTANCE

Suspension of five years; a notation on the Student's transcript until graduation; grade of 0 in the course; publication of the decision with the Student's name withheld.

The Student paid someone to provide assistance on an examination. In accepting the Student's guilty plea and in imposing the agreed-upon sanctions, the Panel noted the following: there is a high threshold required to reject a jointly proposed sanction; the sanctions are consistent with those imposed in similar cases; and the offence is serious.

PLAGIARISM

Suspension of two years; a notation on the Student's transcript for three years; grade of 0 in the course; publication of the decision with the Student's name withheld.

The Student plagiarized a topic proposal. In finding the Student guilty and in imposing the sanctions, the Panel noted the following: the offence is serious; there is a need for deterrence; the Student undermined the grades-based system of evaluation and broke

the honour code that is essential to modern learning; and the sanctions were consistent with those imposed in similar cases.

PLAGIARISM, UNAUTHORIZED ASSISTANCE, ACADEMIC DISHONESTY AND MISREPRESENTATION

Suspension of five years; a notation on the Student's transcript for six years; grade of 0 in the course; publication of the decision with the Student's name withheld.

The Student purchased an online paper, provided unauthorized assistance to another student, and assisted another student in covering up misconduct (see summary immediately below). The Student agreed with the facts, and in finding the Student guilty and in imposing the sanctions, the Panel noted the following: purchasing a paper is one of the most serious offences; there was a pattern of lying to cover up the misconduct; there was no remorse; the Student ultimately pleaded guilty; the Student had no prior offences; and there are no sufficient aggravating factors to warrant recommending expulsion.

PLAGIARISM, UNAUTHORIZED ASSISTANCE AND OTHER MISCONDUCT TO OBTAIN AN ACADEMIC ADVANTAGE

Suspension of five years; a notation on the Student's transcript for six years; grade of 0 in the course; publication of the decision with the Student's name withheld.

The Student purchased online papers, received assistance from another student (see summary immediately above) and then tried to cover up the misconduct by providing a letter of explanation, which contained false information. The Student agreed with the facts, and in finding the Student guilty and in imposing the sanctions, the Panel noted the following: purchasing a paper is one of the most serious offences; there was a pattern of lying to cover up the misconduct; there was no remorse; the Student ultimately pleaded guilty; the Student had no prior offences; and there are no sufficient aggravating factors to warrant recommending expulsion.

MULTIPLE PLAGIARISMS

Suspension of four years (backdated); a notation on the Student's transcript for three-and-a-half years or until graduation, whichever is first; grade of 0 in three courses; publication of the decision with the Student's name withheld.

The Student plagiarized two mid-term assignments and two essays. The Student pleaded guilty and agreed with the facts and proposed sanctions. In finding the Student guilty and in imposing the agreed-upon sanctions, the Panel noted the following: the offences

are serious; there were multiple offences, occurring in three courses; there is a need to deter other students; the Student expressed regret and remorse; the Student committed the offences during a difficult time in their life; the Student, by using supports at the University, got back on track academically and accumulated enough credits to graduate; the joint submission on penalty would not bring the administration of justice into disrepute; and the sanctions are consistent with those imposed in similar cases.

UNAUTHORIZED ASSISTANCE

Suspension of two years; a notation on the Student's transcript for three years; grade of 0 in the course; publication of the decision with the Student's name withheld.

The Student collaborated with another student on a midterm exam. In finding the Student guilty and in imposing the sanctions, the Panel noted the following: the Student did not participate in any part of the process; there was no evidence of mitigating circumstances; the offence is serious and caused detriment to the University; the University must deter this conduct and not incentivize students to sit out the discipline process in the hope that the University will eventually drop the case; and the sanctions are consistent with those imposed in similar cases.

UNAUTHORIZED ASSISTANCE

Suspension of two years; a notation on the Student's transcript for three years; grade of 0 in the course; publication of the decision with the Student's name withheld.

The Student collaborated with another student on a midterm exam (see summary immediately above). In finding the Student guilty and in imposing the sanctions, the Panel noted the following: the Student did not participate in any part of the process; there was no evidence of mitigating circumstances; the offence is serious and caused detriment to the University; the University must deter this conduct and not incentivize students to sit out the discipline process in the hope that the University will eventually drop the case; and the sanctions are consistent with those imposed in similar cases.