

Student won't be expelled over Facebook study group

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A Toronto university student will not be expelled for running a Facebook study group that his school had argued constituted cheating.

Ryerson University's Faculty Appeals Committee announced the decision to spare Chris Avenir on Tuesday afternoon, a week after his expulsion hearing.

The 18-year-old will be required to take a course on academic misconduct and will have a note on his transcript saying he was disciplined, said Nora Loreto, president of the Ryerson Students Union.

Avenir will also get a zero on one of his assignments, worth 10 per cent of his course grade, Loreto said.

"Chris in our view is still innocent, so it is still too bad that he got zero for that 10 per cent," Loreto said.

"But considering we were facing expulsion, I think this is a victory, certainly a broader victory for the students at Ryerson."

Avenir's lawyer said Tuesday that Avenir has not yet decided if he will appeal the decision.

"It's a finding he's not at all comfortable with. He doesn't believe that it's fair or appropriate," lawyer John Adair said. "The attractiveness of an appeal is that he can clear his name. At the same time, it has been an extremely



University student Chris Avenir faced possible expulsion for running an online study group. (CBC)

stressful experience for him."

The first-year computer engineering student faced one count of academic misconduct for acting as the administrator of the online group and 146 counts for each classmate who was a member of it.

He could not be reached for comment Tuesday.

Professor asked for independent work

His case ignited debate over whether the study group amounted to online cheating or, as Avenir argued, an exchange of academic ideas in line with such practices as tutoring and mentoring.

When the online study group Dungeons/Mastering Chemistry Solutions was discovered, Avenir's chemistry professor gave him an F in the course and charged him with academic misconduct.

The professor had asked that students perform their work independently.

Loreto said Avenir's failing grade has been revoked and he will now be allowed to pass the course.

Avenir has said he joined the online study group Dungeons/Mastering Chemistry Solutions last fall, then later took charge of the page.

He argued that the group was a place online where students could share notes on assignments that contributed 10 per cent to the overall course mark and was no different than any library study group or peer tutoring.