

SPSO decision report

Case: 201804958, University of the Highlands and Islands
Sector: Universities
Subject: Complaints handling
Decision: upheld, recommendations

Summary

Ms C complained about the university regarding the handling of two complaints she had made, both of which were about the management of her course and the university's handling of reasonable adjustments to take account of her needs as a disabled student. On investigation, we found that there had been lengthy delays in the handling of both complaints, requiring considerable prompting from Ms C in order to be updated and eventually receive a response. We also found that the content of the second complaint response was unreasonable, as it had failed to respond to all of the complaints made, including some about sensitive disability issues. On this basis we considered that both complaints were unreasonably handled and upheld the complaints.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to Ms C for failing to handle her complaints in line with the complaints procedure and failing to fully respond to her second complaint. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at www.spsso.org.uk/information-leaflets.

What we said should change to put things right in future:

- All relevant staff should be aware of their equality responsibilities and make the reasonable adjustments agreed in students' Personal Learning Support Plans.

In relation to complaints handling, we recommended:

- All complaints should be handled in line with the complaints procedure and responded to in full.