

## SPSO decision report



**Case:** 201900610, University of Glasgow  
**Sector:** Universities  
**Subject:** special needs - assessment and provision  
**Decision:** upheld, recommendations

### Summary

C's family member (A) was a disabled student at the University of Glasgow. A month before A sat an exam, adjustments were agreed for the conduct of the exam. The exam was for a subject taught by a different school of the university than their core degree subject. When A sat the exam they felt some of the agreed adjustments were not made. C raised a complaint with the university about this. The university identified that the school conducting the exam had put in place previous adjustments for A's examinations while the school of their core degree subject had put in place the adjustments agreed in the month before the exam. The university explained that this had been done in good faith and that they would ensure steps would be taken to ensure the situation did not occur again. C was dissatisfied and raised their complaints with this office. C also complained about aspects of the university's handling of their complaints.

We found that the university had endeavoured to conduct the examination with due regard to A's needs but that, despite this, they had not adhered to two of the adjustments agreed in the month before the exam: that A could be accompanied, if they wished, during the whole examination by a Study Skills Assistant who would ensure that they were able to log on to a computer and access the correct software at the beginning of the examination; and that clear written instructions relating to the examination venue and process would be issued in advance including arrangements for breaks, access to toilet facilities and details of permitted items (including food and drink) that could be brought into the examination. Therefore, we upheld C's complaint.

We also found that the university did not seek or obtain C's agreement to an extension to the timescale for responding to their complaint, failed to explain the reason for the extension to C, failed to update C with a revised timescale for responding to their complaint proactively or within a reasonable timescale and failed to apologise, or provide a reason, for their failure to meet their timescales for provision of a response to the investigation stage of C's complaint. We upheld C's complaint.

### Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to A that they unreasonably failed to adhere to agreed adjustments for A's exam. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at [www.spsso.org.uk/information-leaflets](http://www.spsso.org.uk/information-leaflets). The university should liaise with A to ensure their apology is provided in a format they are able to access.
- Apologise to C for the specific failings we found in their handling of C's complaints. The apology should make clear mention of each of the failings identified and meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at [www.spsso.org.uk/information-leaflets](http://www.spsso.org.uk/information-leaflets).
- Formally consider whether it is reasonable, given our findings that the university unreasonably failed to adhere to the agreed adjustments and all of A's other circumstances, for the result of A's exam to stand. Feedback the details, outcome and reasons for the outcome of that consideration and any proposed actions as a result to A and this office. The university should liaise with A to ensure their communication is

provided in a format A is able to access.

In relation to complaints handling, we recommended:

- The university should ensure all evidence to allow a clear decision to be reached on a complaint is reasonably and proportionately pursued.
- The university should ensure their complaints handling procedure is followed when considering and investigating complaints.

We have asked the organisation to provide us with evidence that they have implemented the recommendations we have made on this case by the deadline we set.