

SPSO decision report

Case: 201203204, University of Strathclyde
Sector: further and higher education
Subject: complaints handling
Outcome: upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mr C complained that the university had not followed their policy and procedures in dealing with his complaints that another student had bullied him, and that the university had failed to protect him. He also said that the university had not observed their 'dignity and respect' policy in dealing with his complaints and had not considered his mental wellbeing or provided the support he needed.

Our investigation found it unreasonable that the university did not respond appropriately to Mr C's complaints. They told us that they had not replied because they considered the matter to be a personal one that was outwith their area of responsibility. We also found that they did not respond when Mr C repeatedly told them that he was attending counselling, that he was not coping, and that he was experiencing detrimental effects of his prescribed medication. We found this unreasonable too, and upheld Mr C's complaints. We also found that the university had not tried to offer early mediation, as they should have done, and had not considered how to deal with the information Mr C gave them, and its potential impact.

Recommendations

We recommended that the university:

- apologise for not addressing the initial complaint of bullying;
- remind staff of the importance of early intervention through mediation in cases of harassment and bullying;
- consider whether the recommendation they made regarding placement could have implications for discriminatory practice;
- apologise for failing to follow their policies and procedures and to take reasonable measures to address additional support needs and mental health wellbeing;
- make relevant staff aware of our decision letter and its findings; and
- consider arranging appropriate training for all staff on the mental health and wellbeing policy.
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