

## SPSO decision report

**Case:** 201204797, Forth Valley College of Further and Higher Education  
**Sector:** further and higher education  
**Subject:** communication, staff attitude, dignity, confidentiality  
**Outcome:** some upheld, recommendations

### Summary

Ms C, who was a student, complained about the way a lecturer behaved towards her, the support provided to her, and how the college dealt with her complaint.

We upheld Ms C's complaint about their complaints handling, as our investigation found that the college initially investigated her concerns about the lecturer through their employee disciplinary procedure. This meant that Ms C was given no information about their findings or any action they had taken. Although we accepted that it was important to maintain confidentiality in relation to the disciplinary investigation, we were critical of the college for failing to respond to Ms C's concerns separately under their complaints procedure. We also considered that their communication with her throughout the investigative process was poor. We noted that they are reviewing their process, and made recommendations about this.

We did not, however, uphold her other complaints. We did not find enough evidence to be able to conclude that the lecturer had acted inappropriately toward Ms C. We were also satisfied that the college took her complaints seriously and worked with her to provide a range of appropriate adjustments to support her through the remainder of her studies.

### Recommendations

We recommended that the college:

- provide the Ombudsman with details of the outcome of their internal review of their complaints handling processes; and
- ensure that their complaints handling processes allow for complainants to receive a response to their complaints in cases where disciplinary issues are also being investigated.