

SPSO decision report

Case: 201501382, University of Aberdeen
Sector: further and higher education
Subject: communication staff attitude dignity and confidentiality
Outcome: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Miss C started a part-time distance learning masters degree course at the university. Within a few weeks she found that she was struggling with the course and she left. The university said they could only refund 40 percent of Miss C's course fees, because this was all they would offer to students who left between 31 January and 31 May in any year. Miss C complained about this, and that the university had not told her soon enough that the course was for practicing professionals with excellent IT skills and a good level of maths and, therefore, was unsuitable for her. Miss C also complained that the university ignored her main complaint that she should not have been accepted onto the course.

We found that Miss C had not read much information about the course before she applied. The university website said the course was for practicing professionals, and that the course included IT, probability and finance-related numeracy. As an applicant to the course, it was Miss C's responsibility to read the relevant information in order to decide whether this was the right course for her. If she was in any doubt, Miss C could have contacted the university to discuss whether for the course was suitable for her.

We looked at the university's file on Miss C's complaint, and it was clear that they had considered her complaint about being admitted to the course, although the university acknowledged it was not covered in the report they sent to her. The university also acknowledged that they had made an error in offering Miss C a 40 percent refund. Their tuition fee refund policy was clear that no refund should be offered for the course Miss C was studying, where the course had been started or where a student had received the learning materials. The university said that as they had made the offer of a 40 percent refund, even though it was against their policy, they would honour the offer. We did not uphold Miss C's complaints.