

SPSO decision report



Case: 201900616, University of Glasgow
Sector: Universities
Subject: Special needs - assessment and provision
Decision: upheld, recommendations

Summary

C complained on behalf of their family member (A) about the way A was treated by the university. C's complaint was regarding a support meeting which they attended with A. C said that the meeting was unreasonably cut short by university staff after a disagreement about recording the meeting; A was required to make a recording as he is blind, but university staff refused to allow this. C also held concerns regarding the handling of the complaint they subsequently made about this matter.

We found that the university had unreasonably refused to allow A to record the meeting, despite this being an established practice. When C attempted to raise this with the staff, they abruptly ended the meeting, stating they considered that C's behaviour had become unreasonable. In doing this, we found that they had not followed the university's policies for managing unacceptable behaviour. We upheld this aspect of the complaint.

In addition, we agreed that there had been failings in the handling of the complaint, including a failure by the staff involved to provide reasonably accurate statements of what had occurred, and a failure by the university to fully respond to the points of complaint raised. We upheld this aspect of C's complaint.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to A and C for failing to take account of their equalities obligations in refusing consent to record the meeting, for ending that meeting unreasonably, and for failing to reasonably handle C's 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:

- Staff should follow the Code of Practice when addressing unacceptable behaviour.
- Staff should take account of their equalities duties when considering requests for reasonable adjustments made by disabled students.

In relation to complaints handling, we recommended:

- All complaints should provide clear outcomes to all complaints raised, and reasonably consider and interrogate all available evidence to resolve contradictions, where possible.
- Staff should give reasonably accurate statements in complaint investigations, being clear about any factors which may impact their recollection or the accuracy of their statements.

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.