

SPSO decision report



Case: 202503342, University of Glasgow
Sector: Universities
Subject: Academic appeal / exam results / degree classification
Decision: some upheld, recommendations

Summary

C, a former student at the university, complained about a number of matters regarding their course and the university's handling of C's appeal and complaint.

C complained that the university had unreasonably declined to consider their appeal because they had appealed after graduation. The university's regulations state that while normally students may not appeal once they have graduated, exceptionally appeals may be allowed after graduation if there is evidence 'that the conduct of the Board of Examiners was defective or that the Board was deprived of essential information'. We found that the university did not demonstrate that it properly considered whether the exception applied, nor that C was given adequate information or an opportunity to provide relevant evidence. We considered this to be unreasonable and in this respect the appeal decision was procedurally flawed. We upheld this complaint.

C also complained that students on their course were treated inequitably in comparison with students on another, similar course. We did not find sufficient evidence to support this complaint or to conclude that there was maladministration in this regard. We did not uphold this complaint.

Finally, C complained that the university failed to investigate and respond reasonably to their complaint. We found that there was a failure to update C in line with the complaint handling procedure, and a lack of information to evidence steps that were taken to investigate the complaint. While this was in the context of a lengthy passage of time since the events and staff changes at the university, on balance, we upheld this complaint.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to C for unreasonably declining to consider their academic appeal, and failing to investigate and respond reasonably to their complaint. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at www.spsa.org.uk/meaningful-apologies.
- Fully explain the exceptions route under Regulation 26.3.7 to C, provide C with the opportunity to give any information or evidence relating to this exception, and provide a response as to whether this meets the grounds to exceptionally consider the appeal after graduation.

What we said should change to put things right in future:

- Where a student wishes to appeal after graduation, University Regulation 26.3.7 should be fully explained including the circumstances in which an exception may be made, and students should be given adequate opportunity to provide evidence in support of that exception.

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.