

Case: 201102823, University of the West of Scotland
Sector: further and higher education
Subject: complaints handling
Outcome: not upheld, action taken by body to remedy, no recommendations

Summary

Mrs C was a student on a nursing course. In her final year, academic staff gave her misleading advice about how to complete a written assignment. One of the academic staff who gave her this advice marked the assignment and gave it an A grade. However, an internal moderator marked it as a D grade, because Mrs C had not followed the assignment guidelines. Subsequently, external moderators decided that the assignment should be awarded a C grade.

As Mrs C had completed the assignment based on the misleading advice she was given by academic staff, which was not her fault, she felt that downgrading was unjust and submitted an academic appeal. This was immediately upheld and Mrs C was told she could re-submit the assignment as a first attempt. As, however, the assignment related to a completed placement, Mrs C felt that re-submission was not viable and she told the university that she did not accept the outcome of the academic appeal. Instead, she submitted a formal complaint, asking for a thorough investigation. She asked them to recognise that re-submission was not a viable option and to award the unmoderated A grade. The university acknowledged their error but said it was not within their powers to award an unmoderated grade, and that Mrs C would have to complete some form of assessment for the grade to change. Mrs C complained to us that the university did not respond reasonably to her complaints about the advice she was given about the written assignment.

From looking at the evidence we found that from the academic appeal onward, the university acknowledged that they were at fault because staff gave Mrs C misleading advice. This was reflected in the response to her complaint. The university explained to Mrs C why they could not award an unmoderated grade, and tried to provide resolution in line with their regulations. They also took steps to avoid this happening again. On this basis we took the view that the university responded reasonably to Mrs C's complaints.