

## SPSO decision report

**Case:** 201301099, New College Lanarkshire  
**Sector:** further and higher education  
**Subject:** policy/administration  
**Outcome:** some upheld, recommendations

### Summary

Miss C, who was a student, complained that she was unfairly and hastily withdrawn from her placement (time spent in a workplace to get work experience). She said that when she complained to the college they did not follow their complaints handling procedure. The decision to remove Miss C from the placement was one that the college were entitled to make, and so our investigation focused on the administrative and procedural actions leading up to that decision, especially the handling of a meeting between Ms C and the college.

Our investigation found that the college had, in considering Miss C's complaint, accepted that they should have explained why she was being called to the meeting, and that she should have been made aware of any concerns about her performance before it. As a result of the original complaint, the college had reviewed their procedures. Students will in future be advised in advance about the purpose of a meeting, and a log book has been introduced to record student progress.

Miss C was concerned that two members of staff had attended the meeting, but we were satisfied that the college explained the reasons for this. We were, however, concerned that action was not taken earlier when the placement brought concerns about Miss C's progress to the college's attention, and that a number of days passed before calling Miss C to the meeting.

We were satisfied that the college had considered and responded to the issues Miss C raised and had followed their procedures in handling her complaint. We did find that the question of who should attend an appeal hearing was open to misunderstanding, but we did not comment on this as the college have since introduced a two stage complaints procedure with no referral to an appeal hearing.

### Recommendations

We recommended that the college:

- follow up in writing, when meeting with a student to discuss concerns regarding their placement;
- provide a student in advance of a meeting with all documents to which the college are going to refer; and
- ensure that relevant staff are aware of the need to advise complainants of the next step in the complaints procedure if they remain dissatisfied.