

SPSO decision report

Case: 201304459, University of St Andrews
Sector: further and higher education
Subject: academic appeal/exam results/degree classification
Outcome: not upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mr C was a student with additional support needs. He complained that the university unfairly terminated his studies, and did not support him through the appeals process. Mr C's studies had previously been terminated three times, but he had successfully appealed each decision. On the fourth occasion, when the university terminated his studies Mr C appealed again, but this time the university did not uphold his appeal and he was withdrawn from his course. Mr C said that he had not been supported through the terminations and appeals process, which had caused him additional stress that affected his performance. Mr C also complained that the university failed to consider his circumstances in handling his final appeal.

Our investigation found that the university had carried out a professional assessment of Mr C when he first attended there and had put in place adjustments to which he had agreed. These adjustments were reviewed during his time at the university. We were satisfied that the university had taken action following the second termination of his studies (the subject of his complaint to us) to try to minimise the impact of the appeals process on his studies. The third and fourth terminations had occurred outwith term-time. We were satisfied that the university provided Mr C with reasonable support to meet his needs through the process of his appeals and the decisions to terminate his studies. We were also satisfied that they gave adequate consideration to all the material Mr C submitted as part of his final appeal against the fourth and final termination of his studies. Although we did not uphold Mr C's complaints, we did make a recommendation.

Recommendations

We recommended that the university:

- consider the termination of studies procedures and confirm to us that they are satisfied that they are suitable for students diagnosed with learning difficulties.