

SPSO decision report

Case: 201305939, University of the Highlands and Islands

Sector: further and higher education

Subject: complaints handling

Outcome: some upheld, recommendations

Summary

Ms C, a former student, said that the university had not made reasonable attempts to resolve issues she raised about resources. She complained to them about this, and about their decision not to accept future applications from her on the grounds of inappropriate conduct. The university did not uphold her complaints and she complained to us.

Our investigation found that the university had tried to informally resolve the issues she raised and had carried out a thorough investigation. However, they had not given her the opportunity to respond to the allegations about her conduct, and had not followed their disciplinary procedure. We, therefore, found it unreasonable that the university decided to refuse her applications without giving her the opportunity to respond to these allegations.

Recommendations

We recommended that the university:

- consider either extending the scope of the existing student disciplinary policy to include a broader range of unreasonable actions, or implement a specific unreasonable actions policy to assist staff in managing communications with students where necessary; and
- apologise for refusing to accept future applications on the basis of behaviour when they had not followed their own procedures for managing student behaviour.