

## SPSO decision report

**Case:** 201405116, University of Strathclyde  
**Sector:** further and higher education  
**Subject:** complaints handling  
**Outcome:** not upheld, recommendations

### Summary

Mr C complained about the teaching and assessment of a module on his course. He also considered he was treated unfairly and with bias which he said had caused him stress and impacted on his studies.

Mr C complained to the university following the outcome of an academic appeal which was partially upheld. Of the sixteen points of complaint considered, one of the points of complaint was partially upheld, and a recommendation was made for an external independent assessment of Mr C's work on the module to be carried out.

We were satisfied that the university had carried out a proper and thorough investigation of Mr C's complaint including a serious allegation concerning the alleged conduct of a member of staff towards him. We also were satisfied that Mr C's personal circumstances were taken account of.

We also considered whether there was any unreasonable delay by the university in carrying out their investigation of Mr C's complaint. While we accepted there was a delay, we did not consider this was unreasonable given the extent of the investigation carried out and as Mr C had been notified that there would be a delay and the reason for this.

The university told us that there is no requirement under their complaints handling procedure for meetings which take place as part of an attempted frontline resolution of complaints to be documented, nor would it be practical to do so. It was also not departmental policy to record meetings which academic staff have with students to try to ascertain and resolve a student's concerns. However, we are of the view that where a student raises a complaint at a meeting with a member of the university staff, in particular where a potentially serious allegation is made about the conduct of a member of staff, this should be recorded.

### Recommendations

We recommended that the university:

- give consideration to staff documenting meetings they have with students where a complaint is raised.