

SPSO decision report

Case: 201500707, University of St Andrews
Sector: further and higher education
Subject: admissions
Outcome: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Mr C applied to study at the university and was offered a place with the fee status of 'rest of UK'. After he accepted the offer, Mr C asked the university to reassess his fee status to 'home/EU'. The university did this and, as a result, Mr C lost his place at the university. Mr C complained to us that the university failed to explain how his offer would be reassessed, and that they failed to tell him when he made his fee status enquiry that all funded places for home/EU students had been filled.

We found the university told Mr C that if he wanted them to reassess his fee status, and if his fee status changed to home/EU, they would re-evaluate his application under their home/EU application framework and they may change or cancel the offer previously made to him. Mr C told us he assumed that he would not lose his place at the university as a result of the reassessment of his fee status. Because of this assumption, he did not contact the university for more information about how reassessment would take place, and what exactly this could mean for him. In our view, it was not reasonable to hold the university responsible for Mr C's assumptions.

Mr C believed he had a choice about which fee status category to be in. It was the university's policy that applicants could not choose their fee status. The university assessed fee status themselves on the basis of information provided by applicants. It was also university policy that the most recent fee status assessment was the one that remained valid, and an applicant could not decide to go back to a previous fee status, even if their offer was withdrawn following fee status reassessment. The university expected applicants to provide correct information so they could assess fee status accurately, and the process was not designed to help applicants choose which fee status category they wanted. Given this, we accepted the university's explanation of why they would not tell Mr C that there were no places left in the home/EU fee category. This information was not relevant to the reassessment of Mr C's fee status, which was a process he started. We did not uphold Mr C's complaints.