

SPSO decision report

Case: 201500986, University of the West of Scotland
Sector: further and higher education
Subject: communication staff attitude dignity and confidentiality
Outcome: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Ms C complained that she had made the university aware of issues she was experiencing at home during her third year of studies in relation to childcare and illness, but they had not informed her of the mitigation process. She also complained that communication she had had with the university had not been responded to. She identified four specific emails to two members of staff which were not responded to.

We found that, in the context of seeking an extension for an assignment and explaining why she had been unable to attend academic support sessions, she had informed staff on these particular occasions that she (or her child) had been unwell or had issues with childcare. It did not appear that Ms C was seeking advice or support on these issues and their impact on her studies; rather they were an explanation for the extension request or the reason for not attending meetings. Therefore, we did not consider that it was unreasonable that staff had not mentioned the mitigation process to her directly in response to these emails. The university also provided us with a copy of the student programme handbook for the course which provided details of how and when to apply for mitigation. We considered that it was Ms C's responsibility to familiarise herself with the information the university had provided. Therefore, we did not uphold her complaint.

In relation to Ms C's second complaint about emails not being responded to, unfortunately, because of the length of time which had passed since these emails had been sent, both the university and Ms C were unable to provide us with sufficient evidence to allow us to establish whether the emails were received and responded to or, if they were not, whether this was unreasonable. Therefore, there were no grounds for us to uphold Ms C's complaint.