

SPSO decision report

Case: 201501960, Scottish Qualifications Authority
Sector: Scottish Government and devolved administration
Subject: complaints handling
Outcome: upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mr C sat an exam that was provided by an awarding body regulated by SQA Accreditation (part of the Scottish Qualifications Authority that regulates awarding bodies and accredits their qualifications). There was a problem with the exam and because of this all the marks, including Mr C's, were voided. Mr C complained to SQA Accreditation about how the awarding body dealt with his complaint. As Mr C was not happy with SQA Accreditation's response, he complained to us.

We found that it was appropriate for SQA Accreditation to have considered the awarding body's handling of the matter by referring to the most recent SQA Accreditation Regulatory Principles. However, we found that SQA Accreditation's complaints procedure did not comply with the model complaints handling procedure (CHP) that organisations under our jurisdiction must follow. We also found that SQA Accreditation did not respond to each agreed point of Mr C's complaint separately. It would have been good practice to explain to Mr C what SQA Accreditation could or could not look at, answer each of the specific points of complaint that were agreed with him, and set out the key evidence on which their conclusions were based. In addition, there were insufficient records of phone calls made during SQA Accreditation's handling of Mr C's complaint, and they did not advise Mr C clearly about how to take his complaint further. We upheld Mr C's complaint.

Recommendations

We recommended that SQA:

- provide us with a response to the outstanding points of Mr C's complaint;
- share the findings of our investigation with staff, to learn from the failings identified in the handling of Mr C's complaint; and
- ensure that SQA Accreditation's complaints procedure is compliant with the model CHP.