

## SPSO decision report

**Case:** 201503081, Dundee and Angus College  
**Sector:** further and higher education  
**Subject:** student discipline  
**Outcome:** not upheld, recommendations

### Summary

Shortly after the end of his course, Mr C contacted staff to complain that other students had been excluding him and had made offensive and racist comments on social media. Staff arranged a meeting with Mr C and explained that they could not take action under their bullying policy, as the incident had occurred after the course ended and those involved were no longer students. The college said staff told Mr C they would speak with those involved when they returned to college for a new course the next year. However, Mr C said staff told him they would take no action, as they did not wish to lose students. Support staff continued to meet and correspond with Mr C over the summer break, to support him with his concerns about this and other matters. However, Mr C said this support was not helpful, as the support officer made impractical suggestions (for example travel or course options that he could not afford).

After investigating these issues, we did not uphold Mr C's complaints. We found that there was evidence that staff handled Mr C's complaint reasonably, including agreeing to speak with the students involved at the start of the next academic year and providing ongoing support. We did not agree that the support was impractical, as there was evidence that staff gave Mr C advice and support on a range of options, including several that he took forward.

We also found that the college's written response to Mr C's complaint was reasonable, although they could have explained the basis for their decision more clearly. However, we were concerned that the college's complaints policy did not comply with the Model Complaints Handling Procedure, as it set out a three-stage (rather than a two-stage) procedure and did not ensure that people are informed of their right to approach our office. Although we did not uphold Mr C's complaint, we did make a recommendation reflecting our concerns about the college's complaints process.

### Recommendations

We recommended that the college:

- review their complaints policy to ensure it is consistent with the Model Complaints Handling Procedure.