

SPSO decision report

Case: 201507799, University of the West of Scotland
Sector: further and higher education
Subject: admissions
Outcome: upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mr C complained about the university's handling of his application to study an undergraduate degree, and therefore to qualify for home fee status. He said that there was unreasonable delay and confusion in assessing and classifying him for the purposes of tuition fees and that the application of the university's admissions policy was unreasonable in classifying him as an international student.

At the time of his application, Mr C had lived in the UK for approximately 11 years. He had been granted leave to remain outside the immigration rules by the Home Office. In response to the university's enquiries concerning his immigration status, Mr C provided details, including copies of documentation and reference numbers. The university reached the decision that Mr C did not qualify for home fee status. Subsequently, Mr C complained to the university and they established, after making an enquiry of the Home Office, that Mr C did indeed qualify for home fee status. The university acknowledged there had been errors regarding Mr C's fee status and the time taken to resolve this. They said that they were developing a fees assessment questionnaire and collaborating with relevant educational authorities to ensure this problem did not occur again.

After considering the correspondence between Mr C and the university, and the relevant guidance, we upheld Mr C's complaints. We considered the university should have acted sooner to contact the Home Office to clarify Mr C's status. We also considered that they could have communicated more clearly regarding what further information they required from Mr C.

Recommendations

We recommended that the university:

- apologise for the failings this investigation has identified; and
- provide a further update to this office concerning the outcomes of their fee assessment meeting, and details of further action they will take to address the issues in this case.