

SPSO decision report

Case: 201602543, University of Strathclyde
Sector: universities
Subject: academic appeal / exam results / degree classification
Decision: not upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mr C was required to withdraw from his course and, despite him no longer being a student at the university, the faculty appeals committee took the decision to mark Mr C's thesis. Although Mr C was initially told that it would be possible for his thesis to be curated in the university library, the university later told him that this would not be appropriate. They explained that the library collection is the official repository for university research produced as a result of the successful award of a research degree, and that if Mr C's thesis was housed there it would wrongly imply that he had achieved such an award. Mr C complained to us about the university's refusal to curate his thesis in the university library, which he said was contrary to university regulations.

We were critical of the university for suggesting that it might be possible for his thesis to be curated in the library. However, we considered this to have been a genuine mistake and we noted that an apology had been given. We found that there was no regulation supporting Mr C's position that his thesis should have been curated in the library. We found that the university's explanation of why the thesis could not be curated was reasonable and we did not uphold this complaint.

However, we considered that by agreeing to mark the thesis the university may have raised Mr C's expectations that it would be curated in the library. We also acknowledged that there was a delay in Mr C finding out the result of his thesis, noting that it had not helped his situation to have been waiting several months to find out whether he had passed or failed. Although we did not uphold the complaint, we recommended that the university apologise for the shortcomings identified.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to Mr C for the delays in communicating with him about his thesis. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at <https://www.spsso.org.uk/leaflets-and-guidance>.

We have asked the organisation to provide us with evidence that they have implemented the recommendations we have made on this case by the deadline we set.