

SPSO decision report

Case: 201603203, University of Edinburgh
Sector: further and higher education
Subject: plagiarism and intellectual property
Decision: not upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mr C was a postgraduate student at the university. Two pieces of work he submitted were judged to have been plagiarised due to the style of citation and referencing used. Academic misconduct penalties were applied to the pieces of work following an investigation by the college academic misconduct officer. Mr C was unhappy with this decision and appealed to the university. Mr C was not satisfied with the outcome of this appeal and so brought his concerns to us for further investigation. Mr C complained that it was inappropriate to investigate him for academic misconduct, that the appropriate procedures had not been followed and that the penalties were unreasonable.

After making enquiries with Mr C and the university, we did not uphold these complaints. We found that the academic judgement of university staff was that there had been misconduct, and the appropriate procedures had been adhered to when investigating this. We found that the penalties applied to Mr C's work were in line with the these procedures. We did identify two areas in relation to the provision of information to students that we considered could benefit from review, and we made two recommendations.

Recommendations

What we said should change to put things right in future:

- Students should be made fully aware of the findings of academic misconduct investigations.
- There should be consistent guidance for students regarding referencing.

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.