

## SPSO decision report

**Case:** 201607452, University of Edinburgh  
**Sector:** further and higher education  
**Subject:** academic appeal/exam results/degree classification  
**Decision:** not upheld, recommendations

### Summary

Mr C complained to us about the university's handling of his academic appeal. In particular, he complained that his appeal was initially considered informally by his college within the university, that the formal appeal sub-committee did not consider all aspects of his appeal and that a conflict of interest was overlooked.

We found that it was not clear why a draft of Mr C's appeal was considered informally by his college, and we found that communication with Mr C about this was not clear. We made recommendations to the university to remedy this issue. However, we did not find evidence that this consideration had a detrimental impact on the consideration of Mr C's formal appeal, as he was able to submit his formal appeal within the deadline set in the regulations. We did not uphold this aspect of the complaint.

The formal appeal sub-committee saw the evidence submitted by Mr C, as well as evidence the university administration gathered from academic staff. A member of the sub-committee suggested that Mr C's college should draw examiners' attention to programme-specific regulations, and we made a recommendation to address this point. However, the sub-committee concluded that Mr C did not meet the grounds for appeal. While we appreciated that Mr C disagreed with their decision, the sub-committee were entitled to reach their own view on the evidence available to them as part of the formal appeal process. The evidence showed that Mr C's formal appeal was handled in line with the regulations. We did not uphold this part of the complaint.

In relation to a conflict of interest, Mr C did not raise this issue in his formal appeal and, based on the information we saw, there was no evidence of a conflict of interest. As such, we did not uphold this aspect of Mr C's complaint.

### Recommendations

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

- The university should recommend to the college that they draw the attention of examiners to any programme-specific regulations that apply.
- It should be clarified under what circumstances a draft of a student's appeal would be considered informally at a college committee before the student submits their formal appeal electronically to academic services. Communication with students about this should be clear.

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.