

SPSO decision report

Case: 201703229, Glasgow Caledonian University
Sector: universities
Subject: complaints handling
Decision: some upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mrs C raised allegations in her academic appeal that she was victim of racial discrimination, both in the marking and supervision of her dissertation. The university refused Mrs C's academic appeal and failed to address the allegations of racial discrimination. Mrs C complained to us that the university failed to consider and respond to her allegations of racial discrimination and that they had inappropriately appointed a member of staff to mark her dissertation.

We found that the university unreasonably failed to consider the allegations raised during the academic appeals process or register them as a complaint. The university should have identified the complaint and dealt with this appropriately, as part of either the academic appeal or complaint process. Therefore, we upheld this part of Mrs C's complaint. However, we were satisfied that this would not have affected the outcome of her academic appeal.

In relation to the university staff marking her dissertation, we found that Mrs C had not raised a complaint against the member of staff in question, despite being advised to do so if she had concerns. Therefore, we found that the university did not act inappropriately when appointing the markers of her dissertation. We did not uphold this part of Mrs C's complaint.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to Mrs C for failing to address the allegations that she raised in her academic appeal. The apology should comply with the SPSO guidelines on making an apology, available at <https://www.spsso.org.uk/leaflets-and-guidance>.

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

- University staff considering academic appeals and complaints should be reminded of the academic appeals procedure and the complaints handling procedure, together with the importance of identifying and addressing all allegations and concerns brought to their attention.

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.