

SPSO decision report

Case: 201803667, University of Edinburgh
Sector: Universities
Subject: complaints handling
Decision: upheld, recommendations

Summary

C complained about the university's handling of their complaint in relation to language used by an external tutor that C felt was inappropriate. C told us they were specifically concerned that the tutor was not contacted or interviewed as part of the investigation and that it was unreasonable that correspondence between the tutor and the Dean of the relevant school was not included in the appendices of the investigation report.

We found that there was no requirement for the university to contact or interview the tutor as part of the investigation or for the correspondence to be included in the investigation report but that these things would usually happen. We found that the reasons given in the report for why the university had decided not to contact or interview the tutor were inaccurate. We also found that the university did not make clear all of the reasons why the correspondence between the tutor and the Dean were not included in the report. Therefore, we considered that the university had not responded to C's complaint reasonably and upheld the complaint.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to C for not responding reasonably to their complaint. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology, including direct reference to the specific issues highlighted in this decision. The standards are available at: www.spsso.org.uk/information-leaflets

In relation to complaints handling, we recommended:

- The university should clearly record all significant decisions taken as part of an investigation and provide clear and accurate investigation reports.

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.