

## SPSO decision report



**Case:** 201807417, University of Edinburgh  
**Sector:** universities  
**Subject:** academic appeal / exam results / degree classification  
**Decision:** upheld, recommendations

### Summary

Mr C complained about the university's handling of an academic appeal. Mr C had appealed a decision reached by the Board of Examiners following a previous academic appeal which was upheld. Mr C submitted that the calculation method used by the board of examiners was procedurally incorrect. The appeal sub-committee who considered Mr C's appeal did not consider that he had established grounds for appeal. Mr C complained to us that the report of the appeal sub-committee contained factual inaccuracies and that it did not consider the points of appeal he had raised.

We considered the appeal documentation and the relevant university policies and regulations. We found that the documentation of the board of examiner's decision was not clear and we also noted that a member of staff had not communicated with Mr C precisely about the decision. We considered that the evidence showed that the appeal sub-committee did not give adequate consideration to the points Mr C made in his appeal. We upheld Mr C's complaint.

### Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to Mr C for not handling his appeal appropriately and for the imprecise communication in response to an enquiry. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at [www.spsso.org.uk/information-leaflets](http://www.spsso.org.uk/information-leaflets).
- An appeals sub-committee should reconsider Mr C's specific allegations of procedural irregularity and provide Mr C with an explanation regarding whether the decision of the Board of Examiners was in accordance with the quoted regulations or not. The appeals sub-committee should decide whether any points should be referred back to the Board of Examiners for reconsideration. The university should ask the appeals sub-committee to take into account Mr C's specific point about script viewing and calculation error and consider whether to recommend that the Board of Examiners consider this point.

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

- Appeal sub-committees should demonstrate that they have considered the grounds of appeal and provide explanation for their decision.
- Where a Board of Examiners does not accept a recommendation by an appeals sub-committee this should be clearly documented including the reasons.
- Responses to requests for clarification should be clear and accurate.

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.