

SPSO decision report

Case: 201808431, University of the West of Scotland
Sector: Universities
Subject: academic appeal / exam results / degree classification
Decision: upheld, recommendations

Summary

C complained about the way the university made the decision to remove them from their course. C complained that they was not given prior notice that they might be withdrawn, that the decision was made as they returned from medical leave and that their appeal against the decision was treated as a complaint instead.

We found that the university had repeatedly raised clear concerns with C about their academic progress in monthly progress reports. We also found that C should have been aware that this could have resulted in the university deciding to withdraw them. We also found that as C did not raise grounds for an appeal, it was reasonable that their concerns were considered through the university's complaints process instead.

However, we were concerned about aspects of how the university handled C's withdrawal. There was no record of the decision-making process and so there was no evidence that their medical leave and health issues had been taken into account. We also found that the university should have told C the reason that they were being withdrawn, before directing them to their appeals process. We considered that this meant C was not given a fair opportunity to consider and lodge grounds for an appeal against the decision to withdraw them. For these reasons, we upheld C's complaint.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to C for the failings identified in these aspects of the university's handling of their withdrawal. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at www.spsso.org.uk/information-leaflets.
- Reconsider C's appeal; after allowing them an opportunity to submit any further evidence in support of their appeal.

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.