

## SPSO decision report

**Case:** 201900021, University of Glasgow  
**Sector:** Universities  
**Subject:** teaching and supervision  
**Decision:** some upheld, recommendations

### Summary

Ms C, a postgraduate student, complained that she had paid for classes and seminars which had been cancelled due to industrial action.

We found that the University had taken appropriate steps to minimise the academic impact of the industrial action by giving students advance notice of the industrial action and ensuring that students would only be assessed on work that they had an opportunity to cover in the course of their studies.

We noted that students may expect to learn about a particular subject and if they do not receive the teaching they are supposed to get, it is not necessarily sufficient for the provider to purely decide not to test them on it. In light of this, we also considered whether the university had taken steps to make up for the lost teaching hours and the learning opportunities these represented. We did not consider that this had to be a like-for-like replacement of the teaching hours that were lost.

During the semester affected by the industrial action, Ms C was taking three courses. These courses were formal components of Ms C's postgraduate programme. Three of Ms C's classes were cancelled due to the industrial action across two of the courses. Regarding two of the classes, the university offered to discuss course material with Ms C on a one-to-one basis and offered to give feedback on an essay regarding a particular topic. Regarding the third class, no steps were taken by the university to make up for the lost teaching hours. Given that the university made attempts to make up for the teaching hours lost for two out of the three classes cancelled, on balance, we did not consider the university had acted unreasonably.

We also noted that five seminars out of 22 were cancelled due to the industrial action. These seminars were academic events rather than formal components of Ms C's course. We did not consider that the university were obligated to take steps to make up for the learning opportunities lost due to the cancellation of these seminars and we noted that the majority of the seminars went ahead. We did not uphold Ms C's complaint in this regard.

Ms C also complained that the university failed to handle her complaint reasonably. We found that there was a delay in responding to Ms C's stage 1 complaints and she was not informed of the reasons for the delay or provided with a revised timescale for when she could expect a response. We upheld this aspect of Ms C's complaint.

### Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to Ms C for the delay in responding to Ms C's stage 1 complaints and that she was not kept updated or provided with a revised timescale. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at [www.spsos.org.uk/information-leaflets](http://www.spsos.org.uk/information-leaflets).

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.