

SPSO decision report



Case: 201900612, University of Glasgow
Sector: Universities
Subject: special needs - assessment and provision
Decision: some upheld, recommendations

Summary

C complained on behalf of their family member (A) who was a disabled student at the University of Glasgow. A had encountered a number of issues which they complained about. As a result of one of those complaints, A understood an action plan for the support for their learning was to be devised. A considered they, and their representatives, had asked for a copy of this action plan. C complained that the requests for a copy of the action plan had not been fulfilled. The university concluded that the action plan had not been shared with A or their representatives as the university wished to do so at a face-to-face meeting but no mutually convenient time had been identified. C was dissatisfied and raised complaints with this office about the university's failure to provide a copy of the action plan when it was requested and about the time the university had taken to respond to their complaints.

We found that the university had not explained to A or C why they felt a meeting would be the best way to share the action plan with A, and had not provided any justification for why they felt the failure to arrange a meeting meant it was reasonable not to share the action plan with A. We decided that it was not reasonable for the university to have withheld the action plan from A in these circumstances and upheld this complaint.

We found that the matters C raised in their complaints were numerous and complex and that, consequently, there was a high volume of information that had to be considered by the investigating officer and a significant number of university staff to obtain evidence from. Taking all of this into account, we concluded that the time taken for the university to respond to the complaints was reasonable. We did not uphold this complaint but we did have a number of concerns about other aspects of the university's handling of C's complaints and made recommendations to address these.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to C that they did not reasonably communicate with them regarding their failure to investigate C's complaints in line with timescales noted in their complaints handling procedure. The apology should make clear mention of each of the failings identified and meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at www.spsso.org.uk/information-leaflets.
- Apologise to A that they failed to provide a copy of the support action plan when it was requested. The apology should make clear mention of each of the failings identified and meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at www.spsso.org.uk/information-leaflets. The university should liaise with A to ensure their apology is provided in a format they are able to access.

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

- The university should reasonably consider requests for copies of documents and, where they feel it would be best to provide requested copies in a specific context, advise the requestor of their reasons for this.

Where the university's preferred method of providing a requested document cannot be undertaken in a reasonable timescale, the university should reconsider their position.

In relation to complaints handling, we recommended:

- The university should handle complaints in line with their complaints handling procedure.

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.