

SPSO decision report

Case: 202201211, University of Edinburgh
Sector: Universities
Subject: Complaints handling
Decision: upheld, recommendations

Summary

C complained about how the university handled their complaint that related to their disability and housing. We found that the university's decision to request further information from C about their disability to be reasonable and in line with their policy. We also considered it reasonable that the university asked C for further information about some serious allegations that they had made.

However, we found that the complaint should have been progressed to stage 2 of their complaints handling procedure from the beginning, with the delay of 18 days, which in the specific circumstances here appeared unreasonably inflexible.

On balance, we upheld this complaint as we did not believe it was properly processed and the university's communication with C could have been better.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to C for failing to progress their complaint through the proper process, at the proper stage. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at www.spsso.org.uk/information-leaflets.

In relation to complaints handling, we recommended:

- The university are aware of the emphasis on them to ensure a complaint progresses through the correct process. We also need to be satisfied that the university are aware of the characteristics of a stage 1 and 2 complaint and finally that they exercise reasonable discretion when a request to progress a complaint to stage 2 is submitted out with the normal time limits.

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.