

**Case:** 201100862, Adam Smith College  
**Sector:** further and higher education  
**Subject:** policy/administration  
**Outcome:** upheld, recommendations

### Summary

Ms C enrolled on a professional development course at the college. Shortly after starting, Ms C's former employer paid fees to the college for the course. Ms C complained that the college did not reasonably communicate changes in course provision, the consequences of which meant she felt that she was due a refund of some of the fees. Ms C also complained that the college did not reasonably communicate the contact details of the course tutor to her, and did not respond reasonably to correspondence about her complaint.

We found from looking at the evidence that the college did not reasonably inform Ms C, in terms of timeliness or detail, about the situation regarding changes in course provision. In addition, the college acknowledged that the change in the course tutor's contact details was not communicated to Ms C. Therefore, we upheld these complaints.

The college also acknowledged that they took longer than allowed for in their complaints procedure to deal with part of Ms C's complaint, and that they failed to respond to one of Ms C's letters. In addition, the college's responses to Ms C's complaint letters, specifically about her course fees, were not consistent. Although the college said their complaints procedure was available on their website, it would have been good practice at the end of each stage of the process to inform Ms C of the next stage available to her, and the deadline for accessing that stage. We found from looking at the evidence that the college did not respond reasonably to Ms C's correspondence and, therefore, we upheld this complaint.

### Recommendations

We recommended that the college:

- apologise for not reasonably communicating changes in course provision, or changes in the contact details of the course tutor;

- in future, advise interested parties in writing where a proposed course requires validation by an external body, making clear the schedule, and the consequences if validation is withheld;
- apologise for not responding reasonably to Ms C's correspondence; and
- review their handling of the complaint, in particular the thoroughness of investigations and the content and consistency of responses, with a view to ensuring they adhere to a transparent, concise and robust complaints procedure to avoid a recurrence of this situation.