

SPSO decision report



Case: 201700430, University of Glasgow
Sector: universities
Subject: special needs - assessment and provision
Decision: upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mr C complained on behalf of a member of his family (Mr A), who was a student with a visual impairment and an autism spectrum condition. Mr A was enrolled on an undergraduate course at the university and he required adjustments to the reading materials so that he was able to access these during his studies.

Mr C complained that the university failed to put in place adjustments for Mr A's reading materials. The university upheld aspects of Mr C's complaint and made recommendations. Mr C remained dissatisfied and brought his complaint to us.

We took independent advice from an equalities adviser and reviewed the documentation provided by Mr C and the university. We noted that part of the adjustment agreed with Mr A involved digitising reading materials and providing these to Mr A in an accessible format.

We found that the university did not accurately calculate how long this process would take. This resulted in Mr A not receiving the materials in an accessible format within good time and caused disadvantage to Mr A. We also identified issues with the way the university communicated with Mr A about this matter, noting that he was incorrectly informed the texts would be provided on time.

We noted that the university had tried to discuss alternative IT systems to support Mr A. However, we found that the university did not adequately consider Mr A's views and his previous difficult IT experiences. In addition, one adjustment made by the university was to provide further detail to Mr A about targeted reading along with a guidance note. We did not consider that the adjustment appropriately took into account Mr A's reading requirements.

In view of the issues identified, we upheld Mr C's complaint and we made a number of recommendations, taking into account the action the university had already agreed to undertake.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to Mr A for failing to provide him with the reading material requested. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at www.spsso.org.uk/information-leaflets.

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

- When providing IT support for students accessing large texts, account should be taken of the individual's needs and preferred IT/reading systems.
- The university should ensure that any adjustment put in place for individuals with a disability constitute a reasonable adjustment in line with equality provisions.

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.