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FOR MEDIA

Student waits over a decade to graduate due to maladministration

The National Student Ombudsman (NSO) has found that a student's graduation was unjustly delayed for over 10 years due to significant maladministration by a higher education provider.

In 2009, the student, referred to as 'Chloe', enrolled in a bachelor degree at a university through Open Universities Australia (OUA). Despite completing all required units and paying for the course in full, she was denied graduation, limiting her career progression and impacting potential earnings.

'*The student had completed all required units to graduate in 2012 and despite numerous attempts over several years, her graduation was continually delayed due to the university not taking ownership and ensuring the degree conferral occurred. This has unfairly disadvantaged and limited the student's career progression for over a decade*,' said National Student Ombudsman, Iain Anderson.

When Chloe contacted the university to apply for graduation in 2012, she was informed that there was a unique process for OUA graduates and the staff member responsible was on leave.

Despite multiple follow ups and attempts to graduate between 2012 and 2023, she was repeatedly told by both the university and OUA that the other party was responsible for graduation or that someone would follow up but this never occurred. In 2025, the university eventually denied her graduation request due to a stated 10-year limit on graduation requests which was ultimately found to be incorrect.

The lack of responsiveness to the student's original written request highlights a disparity between the university's willingness to respond to the NSO and to the student.

It should not take intervention from the NSO to yield a responsive and fair outcome, added Mr Anderson.

In 2025, Chloe made a complaint to the NSO. The NSO investigation found that along with the mismanagement of Chloe's records, the university's handling of her request to graduate in 2023 was insufficient, wrong, and took an unreasonable length of time (18 months).

The NSO has made 4 recommendations that include the university explicitly and unreservedly accept full responsibility for the delay in graduation, invite Chloe to apply for financial compensation, provide updates to the NSO on the commitments it has made to improve service delivery and make a Material Change Notification to the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency.

The university accepted all 4 recommendations.

To prevent impacting future engagement between the student and the university in the implementation of the recommendations, the NSO has removed references to the specific university and the student's name in the report.

Read the investigation report on the NSO website.

For more information visit ombudsman.gov.au or for media enquiries email media@ombudsman.gov.au