



A University of the West of England (UWE) law graduate has been suspended from practising law for 18 months and fined £3,000 after saying she received a 2:1 in degree result instead of a 2:2, Legal Cheek reports.

The ruling should serve as a cautionary tale to recruiters. The screening process should be impermeable to candidate deception – whether intentional or otherwise – as errors could now have severe repercussions.

According to Legal Cheek, Anna Goodwin marked up her degree to secure an interview at the Army Legal Services (ALS) for the position of Legal Advisor. According to the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal (SDT), the job advertisement specified that applicants had “completed a qualifying degree, normally 2:1 or above.”

Goodwin amended her CV to match the criteria. However, upon a request by ALS to see her degree certificate she phoned the company’s recruitment department to justify her decision.

She said putting down her initial grade would have “disregarded her CV” instantly. Her university result had also “prejudiced her unfairly.”

She then sent a follow-up email saying: “I would like to take this opportunity to apologise for exaggerating my marks on my CV slightly and I can only hope that you will see that my reasons for doing it were genuine in that I find it frustrating that my mark on paper is not representative of my ability and holds me back.

“I have my heart set on joining the ALS and I took the risk to ensure I was noticed and got the chance to show my ability at interview. I believe I am suited for this role and I very much hope this is not held against me and you would still like to consider me as a candidate and for me to maintain my invitation to interview on the 29th July [2015].”

Her interview offer was subsequently withdrawn, and ALS reported her to the Solicitors Regulation Authority. The SDT report says that: “It was always her intention to explain the correct position before attending any interview. In cross-examination it was put to her that she had no choice but to tell the truth when she did because she had been asked to bring her original certificates to the interview. The Respondent denied this, telling the Tribunal that she was aware when making the application that she would be required to produce her educational certificates as this was common practice. She did have a choice in that she could have withdrawn her application.”

It went on to acknowledge that “her actions were immature, foolish and wrong. She had, however, always intended to put right her deception and indeed had done so.” It also added that she had not accepted the severity of her actions.