

UWS Complaints Handling Procedure Session 13/14 - Annual Report

1. Introduction

This report provides brief details on how the University of the West of Scotland (UWS) dealt with its complaint handling procedures for academic session 13/14. In session 13/14, the University had four campuses in Ayr, Dumfries, Hamilton and Paisley and eight academic schools – Business, Education, Engineering, Computing, Health, Nursing & Midwifery (HNM), Cultural & Creative Industries (CCI) and Social Sciences.

In session 2013/14, the University had a total of 16,456 students.

2. UWS Complaints Handling Procedures

The Scottish Higher Education model Complaints Handling Procedure (the model CHP) was developed by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO)¹ in partnership with a working group of Higher Education (HEI) complaints experts.

The purpose of the ‘model CHP’ is to provide a standardised approach to dealing with complaints across the Higher Education sector in Scotland. In particular, the aim is to implement a consistent process for students and other users to follow which makes it simpler to complain, ensures staff and complainant confidence in complaints handling and to encourage public bodies to make best use of the lessons learned from complaints.

The model relies on a two stage process:

1. Stage 1 Frontline Resolution - the School or Department will attempt to resolve the complaint very quickly (usually within five working days).
2. Stage 2 Complaint Investigation - where Stage 1 has not been able to resolve the complaint to the satisfaction of the complainant then a Stage 2 investigation will be initiated. A Stage 2 investigation is dealt with by a trained senior member of staff; they have 20 working days to complete their investigation.

The University’s Complaint Handling Procedure can be accessed from:

<http://www.uws.ac.uk/current-students/rights-and-regulations/complaints-procedure-for-students/>

¹ The SPSO Web site provides more information on the service - <http://www.spsso.org.uk/>

3. Reporting on Complaints

Part of the model CHP requires HEIs to annually publish complaints handling performance information, based around a set of high-level performance indicators related to the CHP.

This is the first annual report on how UWS deals with complaints using the new SPSO Complaints Handling model, The report is for the period 1/8/13-31/7/14 and includes the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) provided by SPSO.

The diagrams on Pages 4, 5 & 6 provide a pictorial representation of the KPIs. To assist with the publication, the statistics for a number of the University's Support Departments have been added together under 'Student Support²'.

4. Analysis of the information

As the new reporting process represents a significant change from the University's previous complaints procedure, it is not really possible to make comparisons with data from previous years.

It is also worth noting that most HEIs are only now publishing their 2013/14 statistics so it is not really possible to compare our statistics with other comparable institutions. For the 2014/15 report it may be possible to compare our data with the results across the sector.

5. Changes or improvements to services or procedures as a result of the consideration of a complaint

It is important to learn any lessons from a complaint, in order to minimise repeat complaints and to enhance our procedures/services to our students and stakeholders. In this light Schools, Departments and Stage 2 Investigation Officers are expected to provide 'lessons learned' information at both Stage 1 and Stage 2 of the complaints procedure.

The University has a database of the lessons learned information captured during the complaints process. The Stage 1 information is provided by individual Schools/Departments when completing the Stage 1 complaints process. The Stage 2 information is provided by the Stage 2 Complaint Investigating Officer and is provided to the relevant School/Department at the conclusion of the Stage 2 investigation.

In terms of the lessons learned during session 2013/14, it was noted that better communication was required from the Disability Service with the University's College Partners to ensure they were aware of appropriate procedures for UWS students. It was also identified that Programme Teams should review the information they are providing for students returning to the programme - in respect of programme changes, amendments and updates. In terms of the

² Library, Finance, Human Resources, Student Administration Services and Student Services

enrolment process academic staff should ensure they are familiar with the implications for students carrying an NA decision.

6. Future developments

Currently there is no audit to ensure the 'lessons learned' are actually making a change in the Schools and Departments.

In session 2014/15, it is the intention to ensure the University's Compliance Officer follows up on all the outcomes of the complaints and lessons learned, to ensure the Schools and Departments make the relevant changes to their procedures.

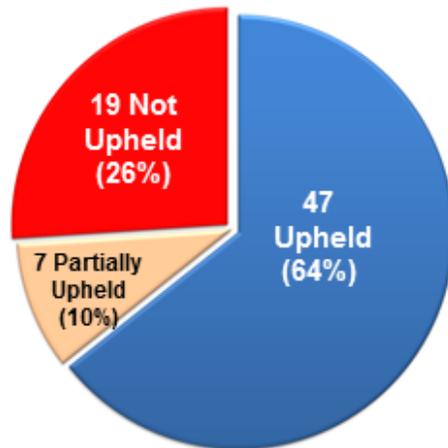
This will ensure that where there is a need for service improvement or change of procedure then:

- An officer (or team) will be designated the 'owner' of the issue, with responsibility for ensuring that any identified action is taken.
- A target date will be set for the action to be implemented, and followed up on to ensure delivery within this timescale.
- Where appropriate, performance in the service area will be monitored to ensure that the issue has been resolved.

Complaints Record 1st August 2013 to 31st July 2014

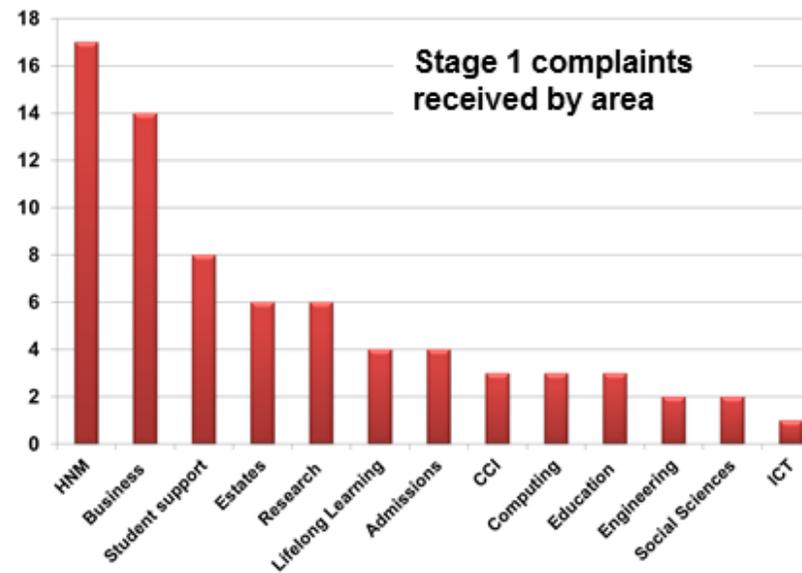
Total number of UWS students	= 16,400
Number of Complaints received	= 73
Complaint resolved at Stage 1	= 62 (85%)
Complaint proceeded to Stage 2	= 11 (15%)

Number of Stage 1 complaints = 73

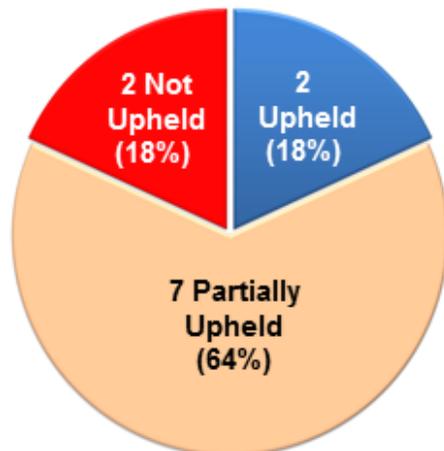


9 Stage 1 complaints required more than 5 days to complete.

The average time to resolve a Stage 1 Complaint = 4 working days

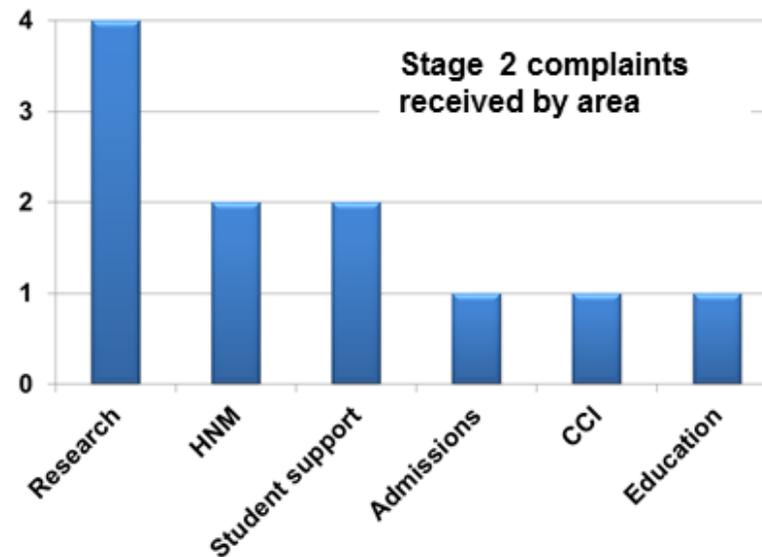


Number of Stage 2 complaints = 11

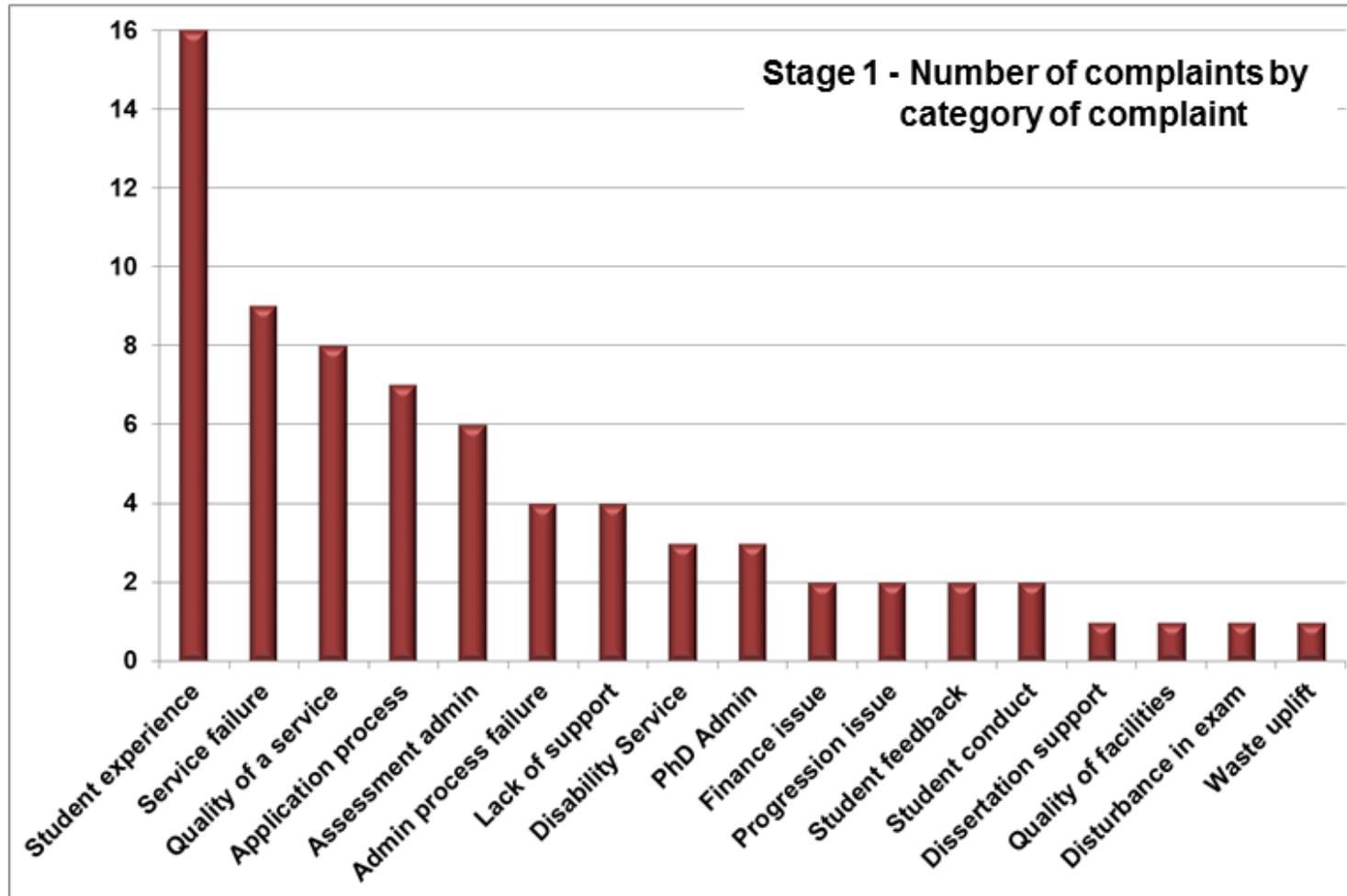


3 Stage 2 complaints required more than 20 days to complete.

The average time to resolve a Stage 2 Complaint = 19 working days



Complaints Record 1st August 2013 to 31st July 2014



Complaints Record 1st August 2013 to 31st July 2014

