

UWS Complaints Handling Procedure Session 2016/17 - Annual Report

1. Introduction

This report provides brief details on how the University of the West of Scotland (UWS) dealt with its internal Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP) for the academic session 2016/17 and provides statistics on the number of complaints considered under its CHP.

2. Reporting on Complaints

This is the fourth annual report on how UWS deals with complaints using the SPSO Complaints Handling procedure model. The report covers the period from 1st August 2016 to 31st July 2017. The diagrams on pages 5-8 provide the information in diagrammatic format.

3. Analysis of the information

3.1. Stage 1 complaints

In 2015-16, there were 51 Stage 1 complaints while in 2016-17, there were 41 (a reduction of almost 20%).

The UWS CHP indicates that Stage 1 complaints should be completed within 5 days. In 2016/17, 56% of Stage 1 complaints were concluded within the 5 days with the average time taken for completion of Stage 1 complaints being 8 days. This delay was due to the complexity of some of the Stage 1 cases, requiring significant investigation, or non-availability of staff to deal with the complaint (for example, during periods of annual leave).

Stage 1 complaints at School/Department and Campus Level

The School or Department the complaint relates to	Campus	No. of Complaints
Admissions	Paisley	1
Business & Enterprise	Ayr	1
Business & Enterprise	Hamilton	2
Business & Enterprise	London	1
Business & Enterprise	Olympia College	1
Business & Enterprise	Paisley	5
Business Support Team	Ayr	1
Commercial Services	Hamilton	1
Commercial Services	Paisley	1
Engineering & Computing	D/Learning	1
Engineering & Computing	Hamilton	1
Engineering & Computing	n/a	1
Engineering & Computing	Paisley	5
Finance	Hamilton	1
Finance	Paisley	4
Health, Nursing & Midwifery	D/Learning	1
ITDS	Paisley	1
Legal	Paisley	1
Media, Culture & Society	Ayr	1
Media, Culture & Society	Hamilton	2
Media, Culture & Society	Paisley	1
School of HNM	Hamilton	1
School of HNM	Paisley	1
School of Science & Sport	D/Learning	1
School of Science & Sport	Hamilton	1
Science & Sport	Paisley	2
Student Administration	Paisley	1
TOTAL		41

3.2 Stage 2 Complaints

In session 2015/16, investigations into nine Stage 2 complaints were undertaken while in 2016/17, four Stage 2 complaints were dealt with (a reduction of over 55%).

The UWS CHP indicates that Stage 2 complaints should be completed within 20 days. In 2016/17, the average time taken to resolve a Stage 2 Complaint this year was 12.5 days. This is an overall improvement in time taken to complete a Stage 2 complaint compared to 2015/16.

Stage 2 complaints by School and Campus

The School or Department the complaint relates to	Campus	No. of Complaints
Business & Enterprise	Paisley	1
Health, Nursing & Midwifery	Hamilton	1
Science & Sport	Paisley	2
TOTAL		4

4. Lessons learned as a result of the consideration of a complaint

In addition to resolution of individual complaints, it is important that UWS learns from each complaint, in order to minimise repeat complaints and to improve the services provided to our students and stakeholders. To achieve this, Schools, Departments and Stage 2 Investigation Officers are expected to provide 'lessons learned' information at both Stage 1 and Stage 2 of the complaints process.

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

Examples of lessons for the Institution are as follows: -

Availability of Staff

We have received Stage 1 complaints from students due to the 'lack of availability' of staff. This 'lack of availability' was due to some members of staff leaving UWS, staff on sick leave and students unable to contact staff during the summer period.

The above was addressed by providing a list of members of staff and their contact details for students to enable them to contact other staff members in the absence of an individual member of staff due to annual leave or sickness - list on Moodle etc.

It is recommended that this good practice is adopted by all Schools to ensure that all UWS students have timely access to staff.

Extenuating Circumstances

Unfortunately, it has been reported that some academic staff are inaccurately advising students regarding the process for submitting an ECS. This has led to students submitting an ECS **and** submitting their work. (Work is not marked if an ECS has been received on time and not withdrawn within 48 hours of the submission date).

It is recommended that Schools ensure that all staff are provided with accurate information on the ECS process so that appropriate advice can be provided to students. The Appeals & Academic Conduct Office is happy to provide support to Schools to facilitate this. More information on the ECS process can be found on the University website at the following link : <https://www.uws.ac.uk/current-students/rights-and-regulations/academic-appeals-and-mitigation/>.

5. Future developments

It is pleasing to note the reduction in the number of Stage 1 complaints. There is also clear evidence from the day-to-day working with complaints that Schools and Departments have a better understanding of complaints and how to conclude them quickly and effectively. Further information on the UWS CHP can and will be provided to Schools as required.

There are excellent Stage 1 investigators in all Schools and Departments who are in regular contact with the Appeals & Academic Conduct Office. This enables good practice to be shared to endeavour to resolve complaints at an early stage. The complaints process is managed well within Schools and Departments, liaising with the Office with regard to deadlines etc. It is hoped that this open working relationship between the Schools and the Appeals & Academic Conduct Office will continue in the coming year.

It is important that all staff, not just the Stage 1 investigators, are aware that the Appeals & Academic Conduct Office is willing to provide advice and support to all colleagues, with the aim of continuous improvement in the resolution and monitoring of complaints across the University.

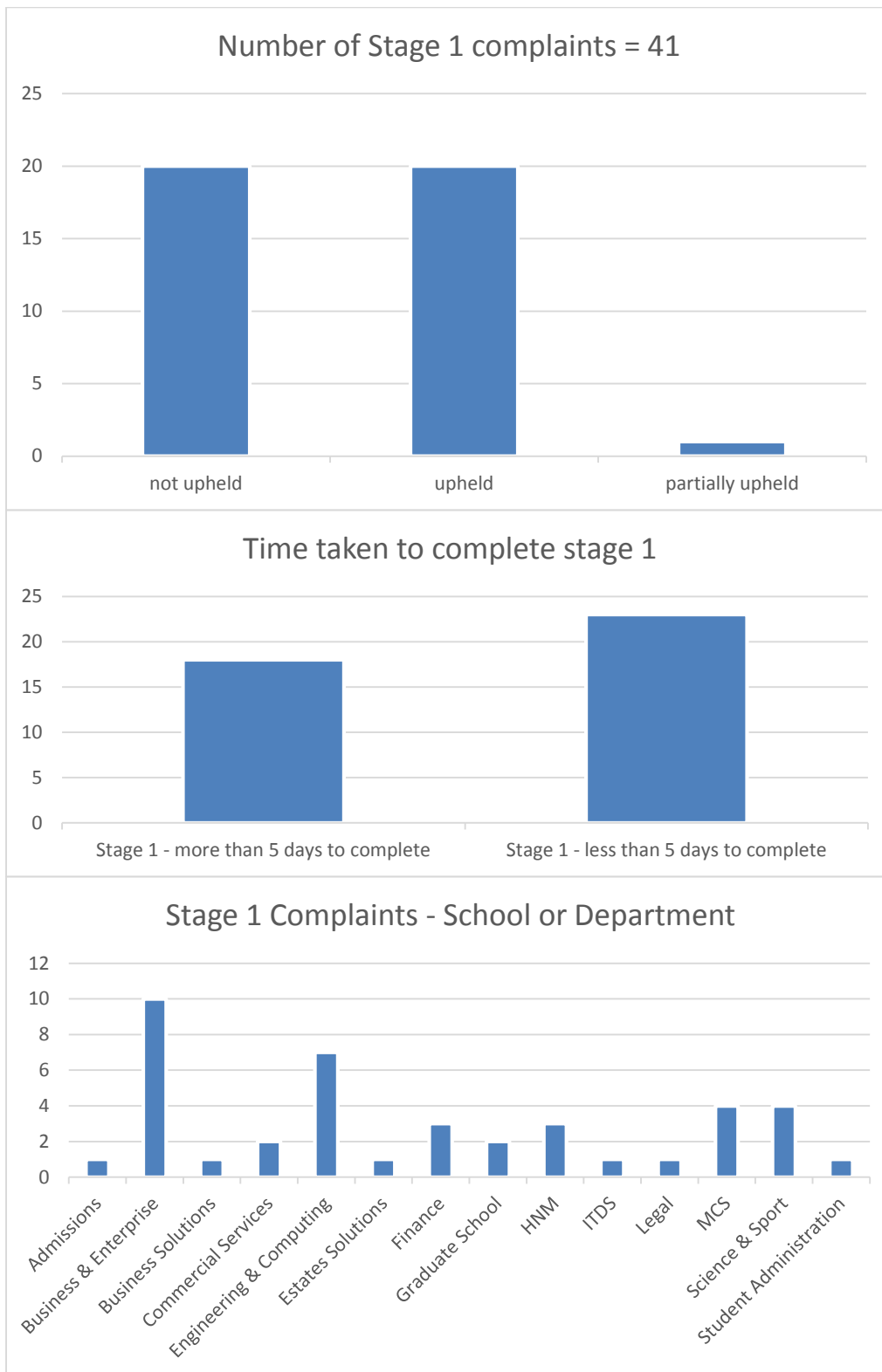
Finally, recognition should be given to the UWS Stage 2 Complaint Investigators, many of them senior colleagues in the University, who are committed to resolving complaints in a short timescale and often through some considerable investigation. Their commitment to this role is very much appreciated and has a direct impact on the small number of complaints which are taken beyond the jurisdiction of the UWS CHP to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman.

Christine Davis
Appeals & Academic Conduct Office

September 2017

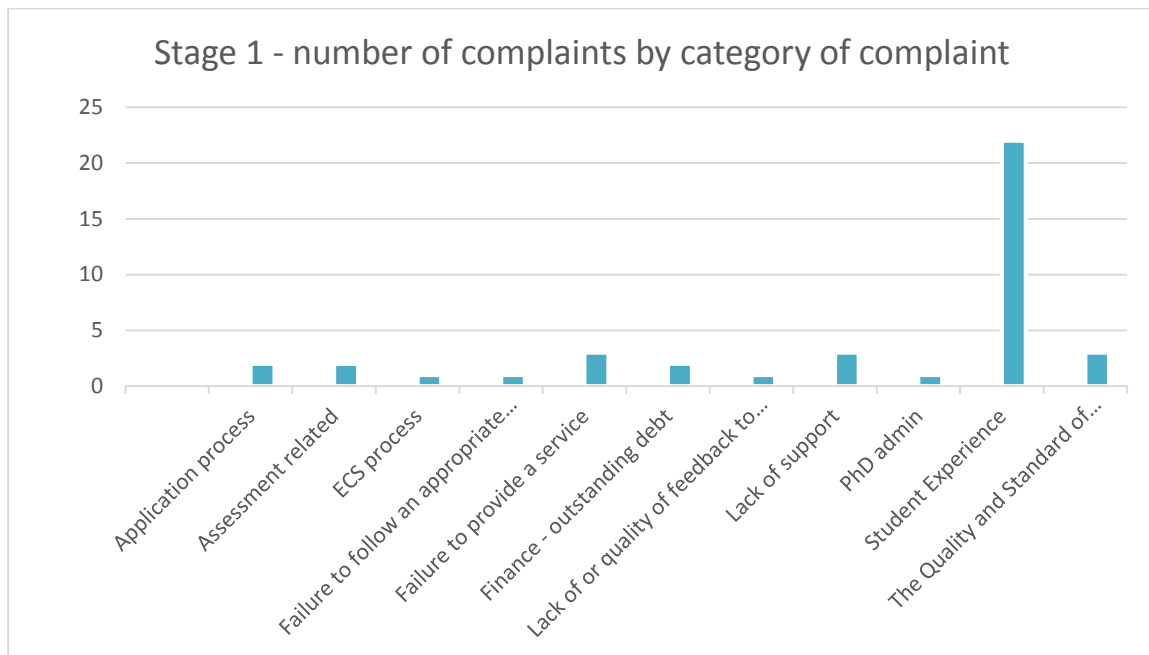
COMPLAINTS RECORD 1st August 2016-31st July 2017

STAGE 1



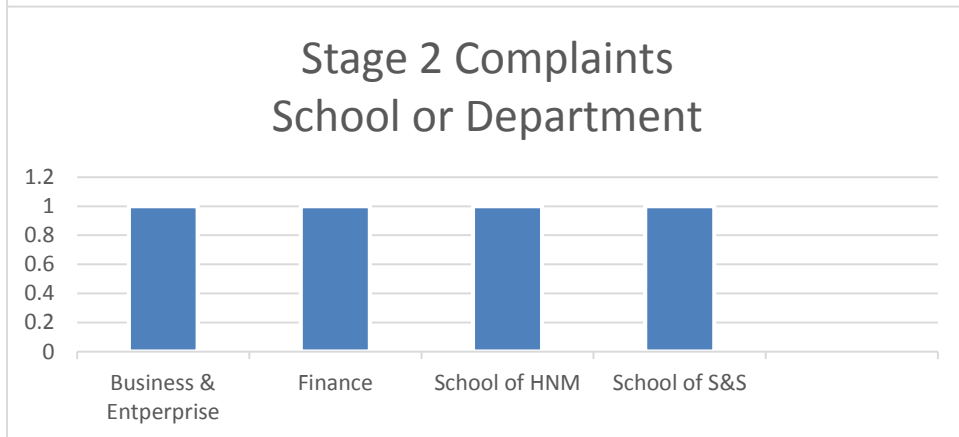
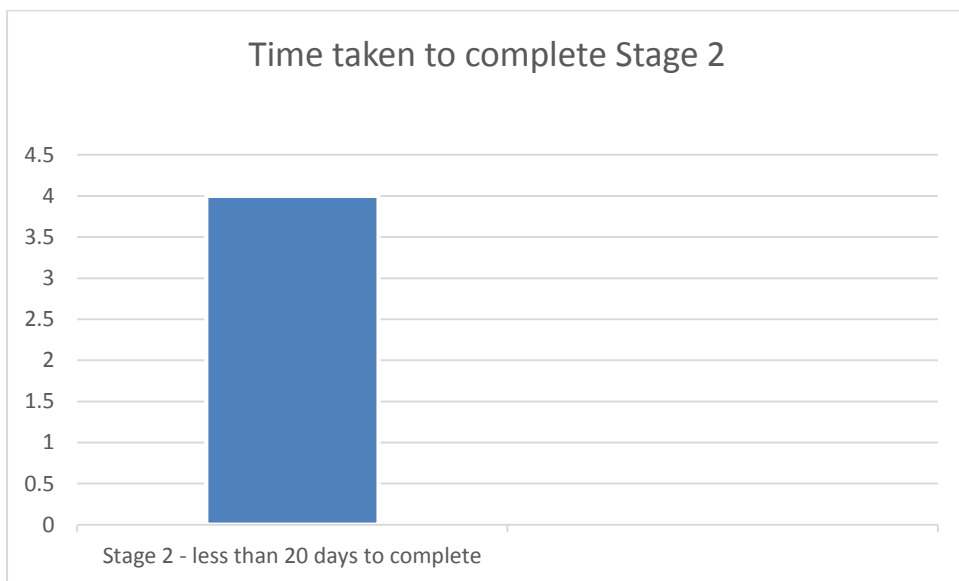
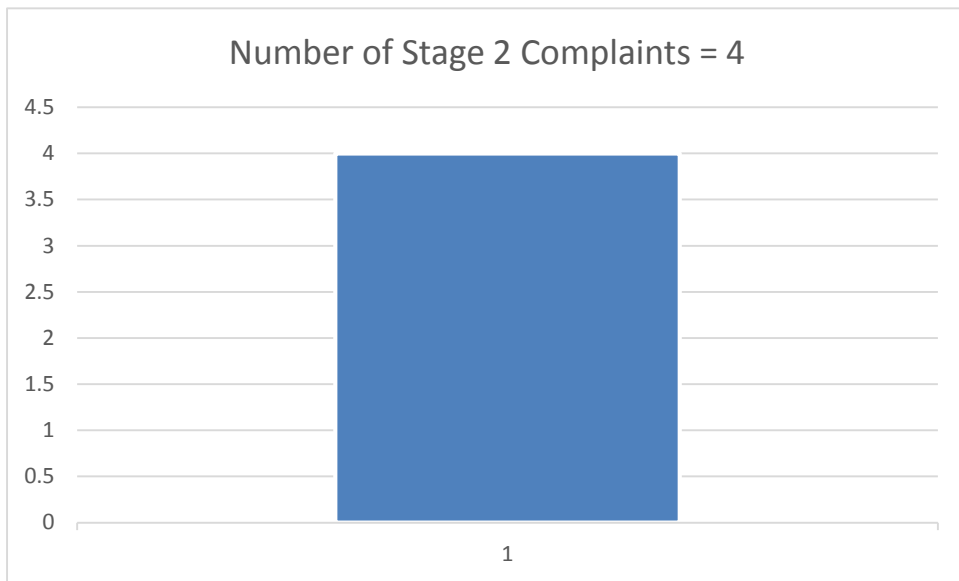
COMPLAINTS RECORD 1st August 2016-31st July 2017

STAGE 1 (cont'd)



COMPLAINTS RECORD 1st August 2016-31st July 2017

STAGE 2



COMPLAINTS RECORD 1st August 2016-31st July 2017
STAGE 2 (cont'd)

