

# UWS Complaints Handling Procedure Session 2017/18 - 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 2017/18 and provides statistics on the number of complaints considered under its CHP.

## 2. Reporting on Complaints

This is the 5<sup>th</sup> annual report on how UWS deals with complaints using the SPSO Complaints Handling procedure model. The report covers the period from 1<sup>st</sup> August 2017 to 31<sup>st</sup> July 2018. The diagrams on pages 7-10 provide the information in diagrammatic format.

## 3. Analysis of the information

### 3.1. Stage 1 complaints

In 2016/17, there were 41 Stage 1 complaints while in 2017/18, there were 47 (an increase of 14.5%).

The UWS CHP indicates that Stage 1 complaints should be completed within 5 days. In 2017/18, 74% of Stage 1 complaints were concluded within the 5 days with the average time taken overall for completion of Stage 1 complaints being 5 days.

Stage 1 complaints at School/Department and Campus

<b>The School or Department the complaint relates to</b>	<b>Campus</b>	<b>No. of Complaints</b>
Admissions	Paisley	1
Admissions	London	1
Admissions and Science & Sport	n/a	1
Business & Enterprise	London	4
Business & Enterprise	Paisley	10
Education	n/a	1
Engineering & Computing	Paisley	2
Estates Solutions	Hamilton	1
Estates Solutions	n/a	1
Finance	Ayr	1
Finance	Paisley	1
Graduate School	London	1
Graduate School	Paisley	2
Health , Nursing & Midwifery	Hamilton	1
Health, Nursing & Midwifery/Legal Office	Paisley	3
ICT	Paisley	1
Media, Culture & Society	Ayr	1
Media, Culture & Society	Hamilton	1
Media, Culture & Society	Paisley	5
Research Student (S&S Grad)	Paisley	1
Science & Sport	Hamilton	3
Science & Sport	Paisley	3
Student Administration	Paisley	1
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>47</b>

### 3.2 Stage 2 Complaints

In session 2016/17, investigations into 4 Stage 2 complaints were undertaken while in 2017/18, 14 Stage 2 complaints were dealt with (an increase of over 250%).

The UWS CHP indicates that Stage 2 complaints should be completed within 20 days, the average time taken to resolve a Stage 2 Complaint this year was 16 days (in comparison to 16/17 - 12.5 days).

Stage 2 complaints by School and Campus:

<b>The School or Department the complaint relates to</b>	<b>Campus</b>	<b>No. of complaints</b>
Business & Enterprise	London	2
Business & Enterprise	Olympia College	1
Business & Enterprise	Paisley	3
Engineering & Computing	Paisley	1
Finance	Paisley	3
Graduate School	London	1
Graduate School	Paisley	1
Research Student (S&S Grad)	Paisley	1
Student Administration	Paisley	1
TOTAL		14

### 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.

Occasionally, SPSO also requests that UWS address recommendations that have been made following consideration of complaints referred to them when the complainant has exhausted the UWS Complaints Handling Procedure.

The following examples of lessons learned during Session 2017/18 should be shared with all colleagues to ensure that the UWS student experience continues to improve.

#### Administration Error

- School process to be put in place to ensure that a student is not accidentally removed from elective module list.

#### Applications

- Colleagues from Schools to ensure that qualifications necessary to apply for a specific course of study at UWS are clearly listed and checked to ensure accuracy. Any changes to the necessary qualification required for any UWS programmes should be reported to applicants as timely as possible.

### **Communication**

- Colleagues are encouraged to use language that is easily understood by students and to maintain a record of all communication that can be easily accessed when required.

### **Enrolment - Communication**

- A student had been prevented from enrolling, due to cost of module. The student claimed that he/she had not been informed of the requirement for the additional module and the cost involved. The School covered the cost and the student was then enrolled.
- A student had their enrolment delayed because of a late reply from an examiner, due to an injury. The student was then enrolled without further delay.

### **Exams**

- Ensure that adequate exam assistance is put in place by Schools and Student Administration.

### **Fees**

- Ensure that the fees charged to students correctly reflect the original offer letter.

### **PhD administration**

- If a student is being withdrawn and the supervisor supports the student's continuation with his/her studies, this should be discussed by colleagues from the Doctoral College (formerly Graduate School) and the supervisor as a matter of urgency prior to the withdrawal. This will ensure that all factors are taken into consideration prior to the confirmation of withdrawal. (This action is in line with the UWS Academic Engagement and Attendance Procedure).

### **Responding to student emails**

- Staff to note that, when responding to students, they should not respond to an email generated by Moodle as it is no longer possible to do so – the email will be sent to junk email folders. All emails should be sent via the UWS email system.

### **Supportive Chairs**

- A lack of supportive Chairs in some classes and labs for a student had been highlighted. Going forward there will be additional communication between individual Schools and Estates.

## SPSO decisions received during academic session 2017/18

UWS Process	Date Decision Received from SPSO	SPSO Decision	Recommendations	Action
Complaints	04/10/2017	4/10/17 - Not Investigated - SPSO does not have authority to question academic judgement.  14/12/17 - case re-opened by SPSO. 1/2/18 - not upheld by SPSO	n/a	n/a
Complaints	17/11/2017	17/11/2017 - Not investigated - not completed CHP re issues referred.	n/a	n/a
Complaints	14/06/2018	Not Investigated - SPSO does not have authority to question academic judgement.	n/a	n/a
Complaints	12/07/2018	Not Upheld	No Recs BUT feedback from SPSO provided.	n/a
Complaints	28/07/2017 (NOT RECEIVED UNTIL 29/11/17)	Not Upheld - due process followed by UWS	n/a	n/a

As you can see from the above information, no cases had been upheld by SPSO during this reporting period. However, the following feedback was received:

***‘The University should reflect on their communication to ensure that, in future cases, the reasons for withdrawal are clearly documented in university records, and are clearly communicated to the student in writing, leaving no room for doubt’.***

### **5. Future developments**

Although there has been a slight increase 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.

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.

During Session 2017/18 there was a 250% increase in the number of cases considered. (An increase of 10 cases – 4 cases considered in Session 2016/17 and 14 cases in 2017/18). This increase is due to the complexity of some cases considered at Stage 1 during the reporting period. However, the number of Stage 2 cases will be monitored in Session 2018/19 and included in the 2018/19 annual complaints report.

I would like to thank the Stage 2 Investigators, senior colleagues across the University, for their hard work and support, particularly during this busy complaints period.

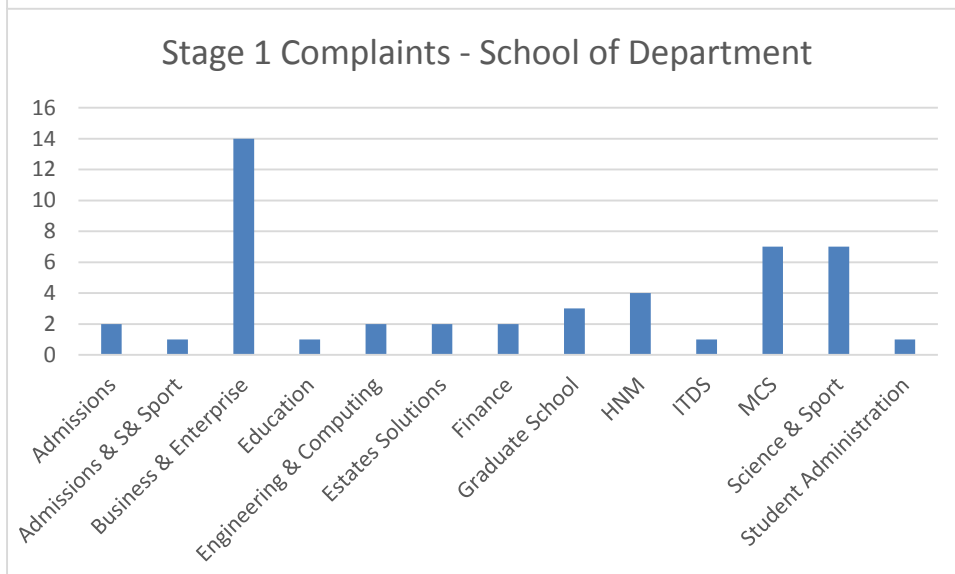
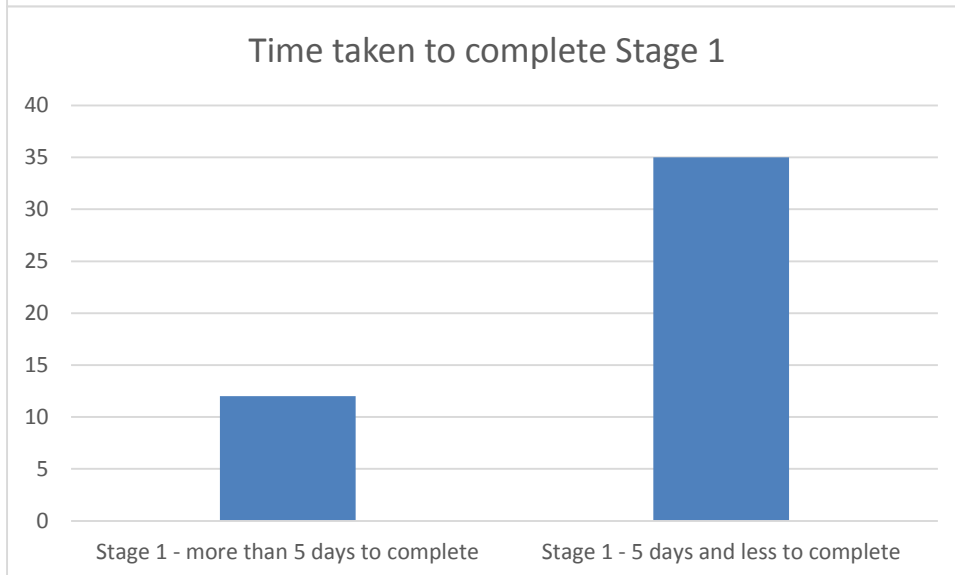
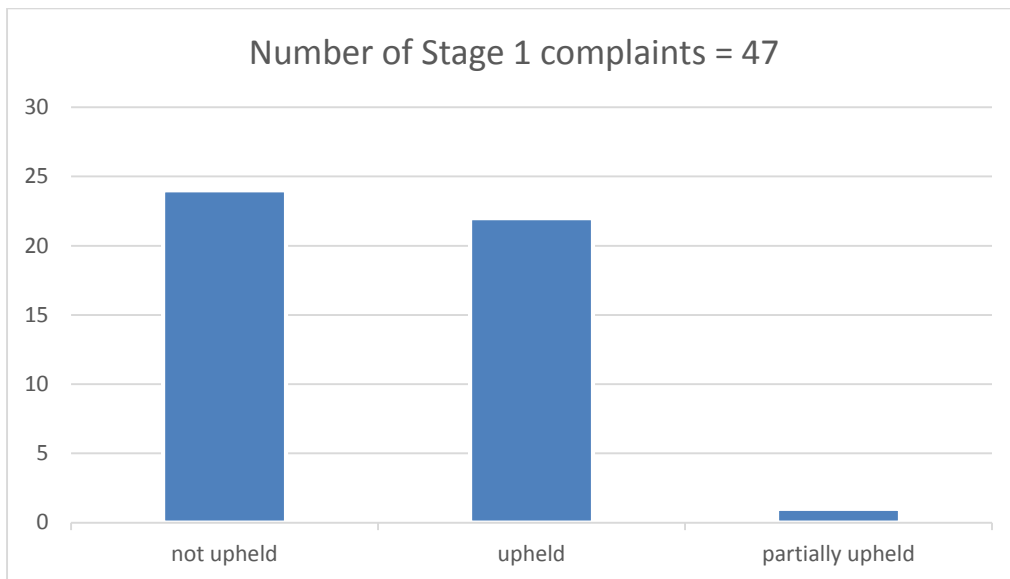
To ensure a greater number and wider pool of Stage 2 Investigators, proposals will be put forward in January 2019. The aim will be to ensure a more efficient process, enabling the Appeals & Academic Conduct Office to allocate complaints to a wider pool of appropriately experienced colleagues and ease the burden on current Stage 2 Complaint Investigators.

**Christine Davis**  
**Appeals & Academic Conduct Office**

**November 2018**

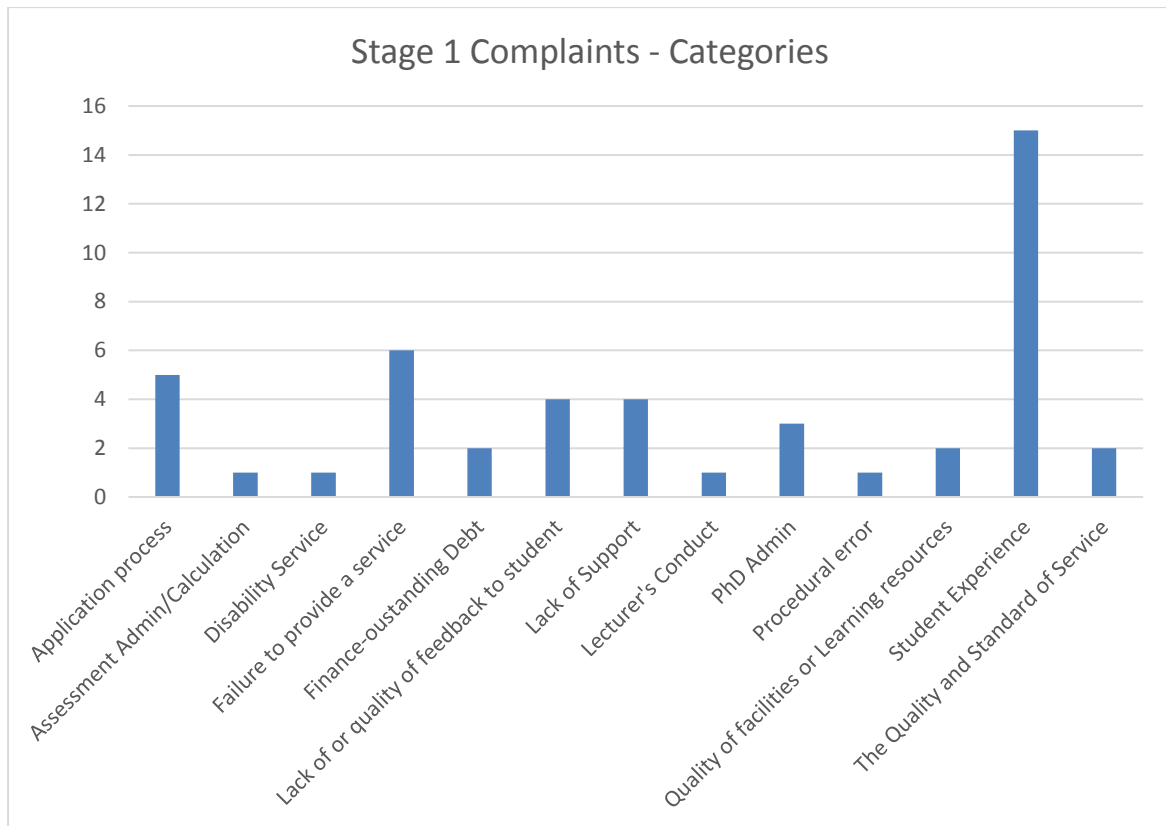
**COMPLAINTS RECORD 1<sup>st</sup> August 2017-31<sup>st</sup> July 2018**

**STAGE 1**



## COMPLAINTS RECORD 1<sup>st</sup> August 2017-31<sup>st</sup> July 2018

### STAGE 1 (cont'd)





**COMPLAINTS RECORD 1<sup>st</sup> August 2017-31<sup>st</sup> July 2018**

**STAGE 2**

