

UWS Complaints Handling Procedure Session 2018/19 - 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 2018/19 and provides statistics on the number of complaints considered under its CHP.

2. Reporting on Complaints

This is the 6th annual report on how UWS deals with complaints using the SPSO Complaints Handling procedure model. The report covers the period from 1st August 2018 to 31st July 2019. The diagrams on pages 6-10 provide the information in diagrammatic format.

3. Analysis of the information

3.1. Stage 1 complaints

In 2017/18, there were 47 Stage 1 complaints while in 2018/19, there were 57 (an increase of 21%).

The UWS CHP indicates that Stage 1 complaints should be completed within 5 days. In 2018/19, 54% of Stage 1 complaints were concluded within the 5 days, with the average time taken overall for completion of Stage 1 complaints being 7 days.

3.2 Stage 1 complaints - School/Department and Campus

The School or Department the complaint relates to	Campus	No. of Complaints
Admissions	Paisley	2
Commercial Services/Student Accommodation	Paisley	1
Doctoral College	London	1
Doctoral College	Paisley	3
Estates Solutions	Ayr	1
Finance	D/L	1
Finance	Lanarkshire	1
Finance	Paisley	1
Legal Services	n/a	1
School of B&E	Lanarkshire	1
School of B&E	London	6
School of B&E	Paisley	14
School of E&C	Paisley	2
School of Education	Ayr	1
School of HNM	n/a	1
School of HNM	Ayr	1
School of HNM	Lanarkshire	2
School of HNM	Paisley	1
School of MCS	Ayr	4
School of MCS	Paisley	9
School of S&S	Paisley	1
Student Administration	Paisley	1
Student Recruitment - Applicant Enquiry Team	Ayr	1
TOTAL		57

3.3 Stage 2 Complaints

In session 2017/18, 14 Stage 2 complaints were undertaken – in comparison to 10 in 2018/19 (a decrease of 28.5%).

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 (was also 16 days in session 17/18).

3.4 Stage 2 complaints - School/Department and Campus

The School or Department the complaint relates to	Campus	No. of complaints
Admissions	Paisley	1
Finance	D/L	1
Legal Services	n/a	1
School of B&E	London	1
School of E&C	Paisley	1
School of Education	Ayr	1
School of HNM	Paisley	1
School of MCS	Ayr	2
School of MCS	Paisley	1
TOTAL		10

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 2018/19 should be shared with all colleagues to ensure that the UWS student experience continues to improve:-

- There were complaints relating to slow computer response time during tests - Schools have reviewed IT functions and systems to ensure students were not penalised by this. It was reported that the incidents with computer system during tests and exams would also be included in the ELIR process.
- Colleagues should ensure that they proactively manage students and supervisors expectations at the beginning of an academic year to address the concerns students had regarding insufficient support from supervisors this session.

- Colleagues should ensure that Programme handbooks, Moodle site and related systems provide accurate and updated information regarding the expectations for Programmes and expected Exam timelines.
- Colleagues should ensure that any information regarding students being passed to an external agency is thoroughly checked for accuracy before being released. (Confirmation that it is allowed to be released must be sought from line manager beforehand as a matter of course).
- Consideration should be given to how alumni discounts offered to students are applied – relevant information needs circulated to the departments that may be involved in administering the discount: Finance, Admissions, Schools, Student Administration. Students should be able to provide evidence that they are being offered the discount, with contact details available to them if they have queries regarding the process.
- Ensure advertised fees are correct and match the fees applied at enrolment.
- Senior managers to review studentship approval process and monitor the content of any project prior to advertisement.

5. SPSO decisions received during academic session 2018/19

UWS Process	Date Decision Received from SPSO	Quarter decision received	SPSO Decision
Complaint	11/09/2018	Aug-Oct 2018	Not Upheld
Complaint	27/11/2018	Nov-Jan 2019	Not Upheld - due process followed by UWS
Complaint	15/05/2019	May-Jul 2019	Not Investigated - academic judgement
Complaint	02/07/2019	May-Jul 2019	Not Upheld - due process followed by UWS
Complaint	12/07/2019	May-Jul 2019	Not Investigated - academic judgement

As you can see from the above information, no cases had been upheld by SPSO during this reporting period. However, feedback was received from SPSO in two consecutive sessions - 2017/18 and 2018/19 regarding withdrawal letters sent to students. It was recommended that the University reflects on this communication, ensuring that the reasons for withdrawal are clearly communicated to the student in writing, leaving no room for doubt.

The above recommendation has been noted by senior colleagues in Student Administration. Colleagues in Student Administration will work on contents of the

withdrawal letters to make important information clear and precise, as well as avoid duplications of what Schools have sent.

6. Future developments

Although there has been a slight increase in the number of Stage 1 complaints (21%), there has been a decrease in Stage 2 complaints (28.5%).

In addition, at the beginning of Q4 (Term 3, Session 2018/19) a new approach was introduced when dealing with complaints. This involved complaints being forwarded to relevant Schools/Professional Services Departments to address at a local level, with a local resolution being achieved.

This approach has been very successful, with the following noted:

- The majority of complainants happy that matters are being resolved at a local level, rather than progressing via the formal Complaints Handling Procedure;
- Individual Schools and Departments taking ownership of any concerns raised and addressing when necessary.
- Q4 Stage 1 complaints Session 2018/19 have been significantly reduced (3) in comparison to Q4 Session 2017/18 data (16) and Q3 2018/19 data (14).

Again, this session, there is 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 University's Appeals & Academic Conduct Office is in regular contact with colleagues in Schools, Professional Services Departments and the Executive Team to ensure that all colleagues commit to resolving complaints as early as possible.

There has also been an increase in the number of Stage 2 Complaint Investigators. This wider pool of Stage 2 Investigators ensures a more efficient process, enabling the Appeals & Academic Conduct Office to allocate complaints to a wider pool of appropriately experienced colleagues.

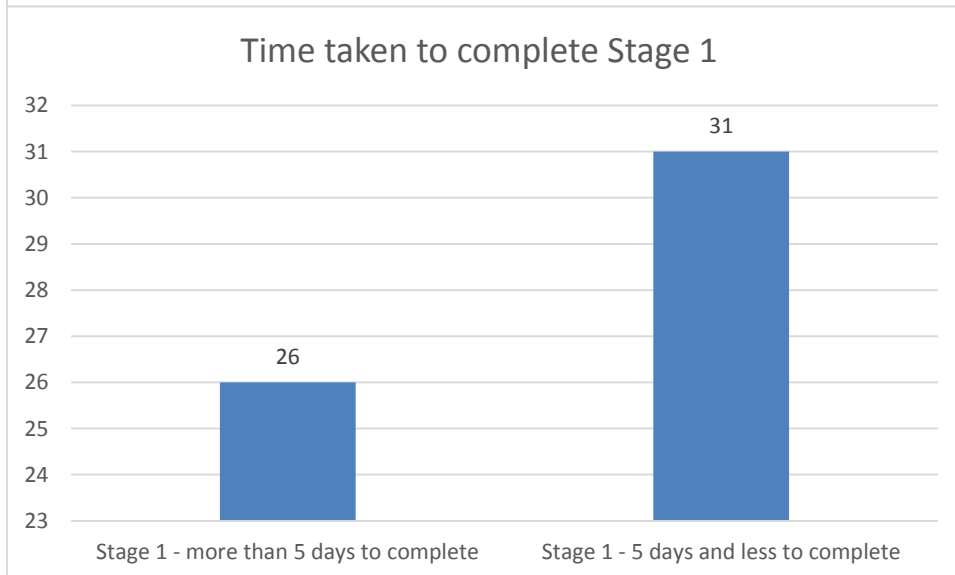
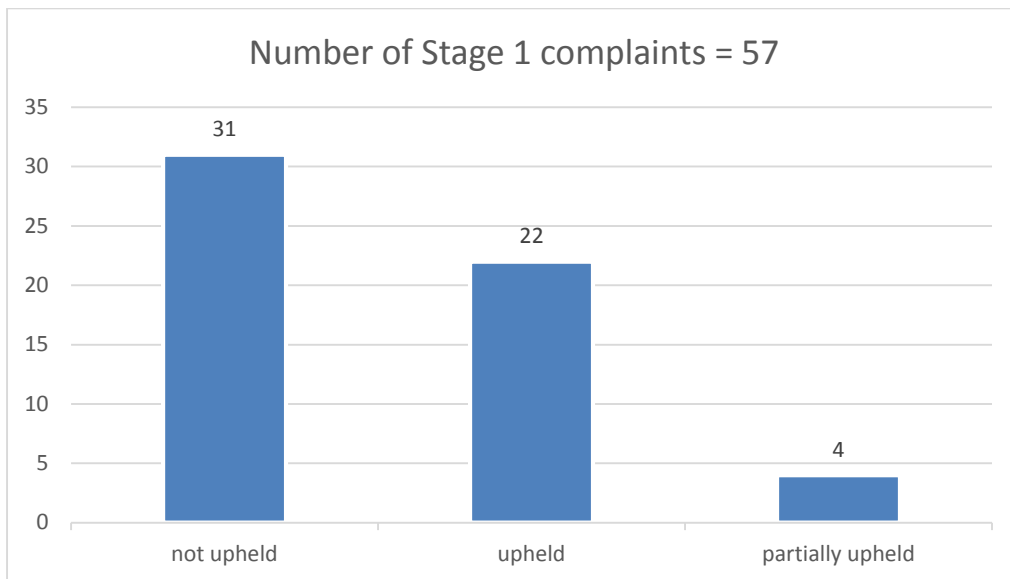
I would like to thank colleagues across the University for their support when handling complaints and look forward to working with them next Session.

Christine Davis
Appeals & Academic Conduct Office

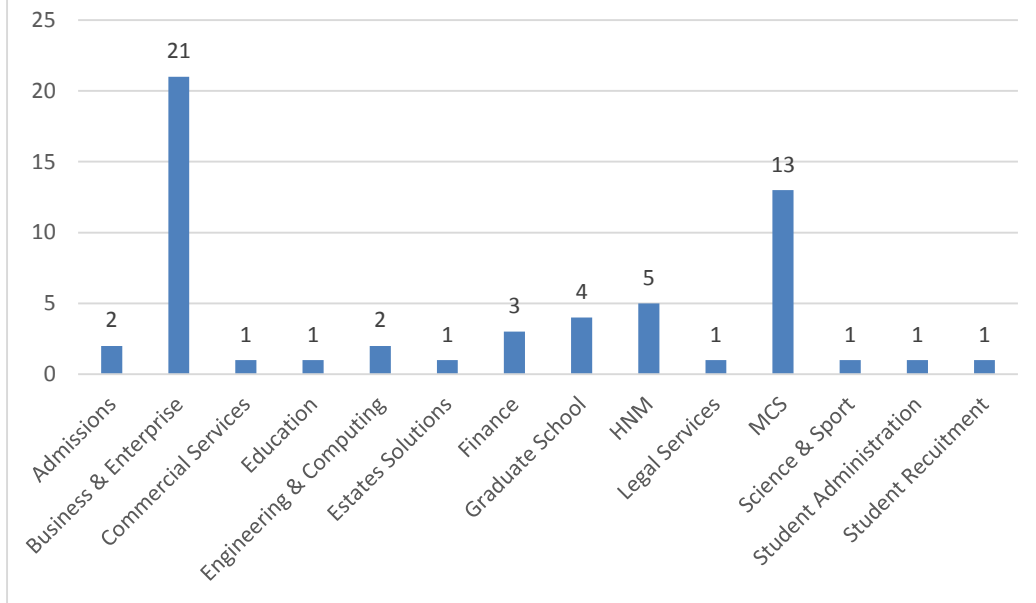
October 2019

COMPLAINTS RECORD 1st August 2018-31st July 2019

STAGE 1

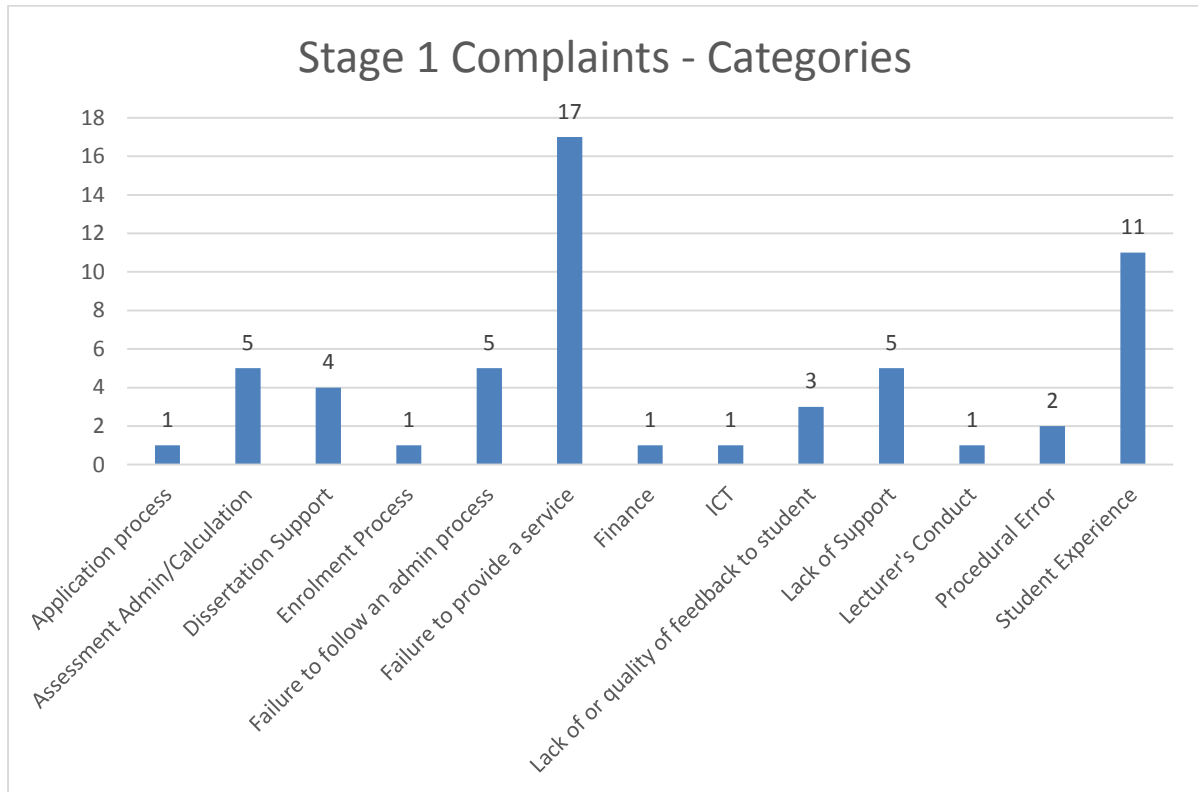


Stage 1 Complaints - School/Department



COMPLAINTS RECORD 1st August 2018-31st July 2019

STAGE 1 (cont'd)



COMPLAINTS RECORD 1st August 2018-31st July 2019

STAGE 2

