

**The University of the West of Scotland Complaints Handling Procedure  
Session 2022-2023 – 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Report**

**1. Introduction**

This report provides an overview of the operation of the University’s internal Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP) for academic session 2022-2023: 1<sup>st</sup> August 2022 to 31<sup>st</sup> July 2023. The CHP ensures that students and other service users have the opportunity to raise complaints which will be considered with a strong focus on resolution for the complainant.

**2. KPI Data 2022-23**

**Table 2.1 – KPIs 1-3**

	<b>KPI 1 Total Number of Complaints</b>	<b>KPI 2 Number closed in full within set timescales</b>	<b>KPI 2 % closed in full within set timescales</b>	<b>KPI 3 Average time for full response – working days</b>
<b>Stage 1 – Frontline Response</b>	48	23 (5 days)	48%	7 days*
<b>Stage 2 - Investigation</b>	13+1**	8	61%	18 days

\* Figure is based on 45 complaints (excluding three moved to Stage 2 which by default exceeded the 5-day deadline).

\*\* In session 2022-23, 13 Stage 2 complaints were received and completed at the time of reporting, with a 14<sup>th</sup> complaint underway to be finalised in session 2023/24; the figures for KPIs 2 and 3 relate to the 13 completed complaints.

**Table 2.2 – KPI 4: Outcomes**

<b>Stage 1 Outcomes (Frontline Response)</b>
1 x moved to Stage 2
1 x No response by School to Deadline, escalated to Stage 2
1 x Not completed, deadlines exceeded, escalated to Stage 2
28 x Not Upheld
3 x Partially Upheld
2 x Resolved
12 x Upheld
<b>Stage 2 Outcomes (Investigation)</b>
8 x Not Upheld
1 x Partially Upheld
1 x Multiple Outcomes (1 x element Upheld, 2 x element Not Upheld, 2 x elements Partially Upheld)
1 x Resolved
1 x Upheld
1 x Multiple Outcomes (1 x element Upheld, 5 x elements Not Upheld)

### **3. Complaint Trends and Lessons Learned**

The volume of Stage 1 complaints has increased significantly during the year of reporting, with a 55% rise in complaints submitted in 2022-23 (48, compared to 31 in both 2020-21 and 2021-22). While Stage 2 numbers (14) were level with the previous reporting period, there was a rise from 11 cases submitted in 2020-21. In addition, there is activity relating to informal complaints and triaging of issues which has increased year-on-year in terms of complaints handling by the Complaints Team and colleagues across the University.

Seven main categories of complaint are noted below along with examples of the Lessons Learned from the analysis of complaints addressed through the CHP. The lessons learned from the CHP at UWS are being utilised to enhance future practice.

#### **Enrolment/ Student Progression and Graduation**

- Schools and Departments are asked to work together to ensure that students can be enrolled and progressed in a timely manner, with elimination of single points of failure which can result from staff sickness and staff absence due to holidays for example.
- Schools and Departments are advised to be mindful of supporting new colleagues to be inducted to processes and procedures in relation to any action which may impact a student's progression or graduation, including recognising that errors can have an impact on current students/ completing students in various ways.
- Schools should ensure the Programme Structures and delivery and timings of the School Assessment Boards/ School Boards of Examiners facilitate Student Progression. The Academic Calendar work led by Learning and Teaching Committee, and engagement around the Academic Calendar in 2023-24, should support this planning. In the meantime, Schools must ensure the marking and moderation process for larger modules is completed in a timely manner, particularly where there are modules which contain both theory and placement elements.

#### **Assessment**

- For assessments, Module Coordinators are asked to reflect on best practice regarding consistency of marking and timing of results to students.
- Students expressed a desire for teaching material to be provided in a timely manner, and these should be provided by Module Coordinators as soon as possible, utilising the relevant platform/ virtual learning environment, such as Aula.
- It was noted that students sought feedback on exams which is not standard process across the University, but may be something which the University should consider in the future.
- Information pertaining to the arrangements for mock Vivas should be clear and explicit and made available to students at the appropriate point in their programme of study. This will ensure that students have equitable access to this opportunity.

#### **Accommodation**

- With regards to UWS Accommodation, the University has taken steps to improve the timings for flat inspections to ensure that all flats meet the required standard. There have also been improvements to processes for departure checks for all flats to ensure no belongings remain prior to contract cleaners entering.

#### **Finance-Fees and Funding Processes**

- IT Holds, related to Finance (Fees and Funding) were raised as part of the complaints reporting during Academic Year 2022/2023 but this has been superseded by wider work in the University which at the time of writing has removed IT Holds for students related to Finance (Fees and Funding).

### **Partner Delivery**

- Complaints have arisen from provision at delivery partner institutions, regarding the timing of assessments and exams. Schools are requested to review informal feedback that may have been received via mechanisms for engagement with Student Voice and feedback, and to action/ monitor as required.

### **Student Communication**

- Module coordinators are advised to provide a clear outline to students of how they intend to communicate and respond to student queries, given the options available such as Aula and Outlook.

### **Admissions**

- CAS issuance and refusal are areas of concern for applicants however, it is noted that due process and procedures are being followed by the relevant teams.
- The triangulation of information between applicants (particularly those applying via UCAS Clearing), the Schools and the Admissions communications could be improved. Colleagues working in these areas are asked to consider the information that is shared and the timing of these communications.

## **4. Scottish Public Services Ombudsman – Review of UWS Complaints**

Following completion under the UWS CHP, four complainants raised their concern with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman during session 2022/23. Three were not investigated and one was not taken further as SPSO concluded, in each case, that the University had followed due process and/or provided a reasonable response.

Dr Alison Gilmour

**Director of Learning and Teaching Enhancement**

12<sup>th</sup> March 2024

Report approved by the Pro Vice-Chancellor, Learning, Teaching and Student Success

Reviewed by Vice-Chancellor's Executive on 19<sup>th</sup> March, prior to publishing on Website and distribution to UWS staff