



UNIVERSITY OF THE
WEST *of* SCOTLAND

UWS

QuEST

Quality Enhancement Support Team

**UWS Complaints
Handling Procedure
Session 2020–2021
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 2020/2021 and provides statistics on the number of complaints considered under its CHP.

2. Reporting on Complaints

This is the 8th annual report on how UWS deals with complaints using the SPSO Complaints Handling procedure model. The report covers the period from 1st August 2020 to 31st July 2021.

3. Analysis of the information

3.1. Stage 1 complaints

In 2019/20, there were 17 Stage 1 complaints – in comparison, in 2020/2021 there were 31 (82% increase) The UWS CHP indicates that Stage 1 complaints should be completed within 5 days. In 2020/21 55% of Stage 1 complaints were concluded within the 5 days, with the average time taken overall for completion of Stage 1 complaints being 6.5 days.

3.2 Stage 1 complaints – School/Department and Campus

The School or Department the complaint relates to	Campus	No. of Complaints
School of BCI	Paisley	3
School of BCI	Lanarkshire	2
School of BCI	London	1
School of BCI	Ayr	2
Business Innovation	Distance Learning	1
School of CEPS	Paisley	2
School of CEPS	Distance Learning	1
Doctoral College	Paisley	2
Doctoral College	Distance Learning	1
Doctoral College	London	2
School of ESS	Paisley	1
School of ESS	n/a - applicant	1
School of ESS	Ayr	1
School of HLS	Lanarkshire	5
School of HLS	Paisley	1
School of HLS	Dumfries	3
Registry	Paisley	1
Student Services	Paisley	1
TOTAL		31

**Outcome of
Stage 1
Complaints**

**Upheld
x 3**

**Not Upheld
x 24**

**Resolved
x 4**

3.3 Stage 2 Complaints

In session 2019/20, 7 Stage 2 complaints were undertaken – in comparison to 11 in 2021/2022. The UWS CHP indicates that Stage 2 complaints should be completed within 20 working days, the average time taken to resolve a Stage 2 Complaint this year was 17 days (was also 17 days in session 19/20).

3.4 Stage 2 complaints – School/Department and Campus

The School or Department the complaint relates to	Campus	No. of Complaints
School of BCI	Paisley	2
Doctoral College	Paisley	2
Doctoral College	London	1
School of ESS	Paisley	2
School of HLS	N/A – member of public	1
School of HLS	Lanarkshire	1
School of HLS	Dumfries	2
TOTAL		11

Outcome of Stage 2 Complaints

**Upheld
x 2**

**Not Upheld
x 8**

x1 Referred to a relevant Council for consideration

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

In addition to the 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 2020/2021 should be shared with all colleagues to ensure that the UWS Complaint Handling Procedure and the student experience continues to improve:

- Fees should be clearly calculated for all students, particularly fees at PhD level, with a particular focus on the clarity of fee arrangements where there is an extension and post viva corrections are required.
- There should be further guidance provided to students in module materials on the importance of highlighting the consistency in the student's use of name. Students should be aware and responsive to the process for updating University system of any name changes.
- Regarding the provision of feedback, and the use of Quick Marks (bubbles feedback to provide comments throughout an assignment in Turnitin) – A team was asked to reflect on this practice to ensure the comments provided related to specific topics and more closely aligned to the assessment in hand. This should avoid any misunderstanding that these relate to the overall module learning outcomes.
- It was highlighted that all students should be emailed their existing feedback on assessments within two weeks.

5. SPSO decisions received during academic session 2020/2021

UWS Process	UWS Session relating to case	Quarter decision received	SPSO Decision
Complaint	2019/2020	Nov-Jan 2021	Not Upheld
Complaint	2020/2021	Feb- April 2021	Not investigated
Complaint	2019/2020	Feb-April 2021	Not investigated

6. Conclusion

In Q4, it was noted that a trend had developed, with approximately 9 complaints being raised per quarter. As this is the formal record of official complaints, the report does not include the number of complaints which have been triaged and resolved out with the formal process.

It is worth noting that keeping the number of formal complaints so low involves a great deal of triaging by the Complaints Team. A snapshot follows for information – comparison of July to September 2020 and 2021.

July September 2020 v July September 2021

Complaints	Jul-Sep 2020	Jul-Sep 2021	Difference
Formal complaints	8	7	-1
Emails received	369	629	260
Emails sent	247	440	193

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, Complaints & 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.

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

Nina Anderson-Knox, Head of QuEST
26th November 2021

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