

COMPLAINTS REPORT – 2013/14

Introduction

1 This report provides a summary of complaints that have been dealt with by the University under our Complaints Handling Procedure during 2013/14. This is in accordance with our obligations to Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) and the Scottish Funding Council to publish complaints handling performance information on a quarterly and annual basis.

2 In August 2013 the University implemented a new Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP) in accordance with the Model Complaints Handling Procedure published by SPSO. The Complaints Handling Procedure was introduced on 30th August 2013. All future reports on complaints activity will be based on a full academic year (1st August to 31st July) but this first report only covers an 11 month period.

Overview of our Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP)

3 Our complaints handling process is intended to be quick, simple and streamlined with a strong focus on early resolution. The procedure involves up to two stages:

- **Frontline resolution (Stage 1)** seeks to resolve straightforward complaints swiftly and effectively at the point at which the complaint is made, or as close to that point as possible. The aim is to resolve frontline complaints within 5 working days.
- **Investigation (Stage 2)** is appropriate where a complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of frontline resolution, or where frontline resolution is not possible or appropriate due to the complexity or seriousness of the case. In these cases an investigator is appointed to look at the case with the aim of responding within 20 working days.

Number of complaints received

4 A summary of all complaints received is included in Appendix 1.

5 During the first 11 months under the new procedures the University had a total of 77 frontline complaints (table 1), in addition there were 8 complaints that were dealt with as stage 2 complaints. Some of the stage 2 complaints had already been recorded as stage 1 complaints and were subsequently escalated to stage 2, others were dealt with as stage 2 complaints from the start due to the nature of the complaints (in accordance with our procedures).

6 The difference in the volume of stage 1 and stage 2 complaints indicates that the majority of incidents are resolved at the frontline, in keeping with the University's aims for early and satisfactory resolution.

Length of time to resolve complaints

7 The objective is to resolve frontline complaints within 5 working days, however there are circumstances when it is not possible to resolve more complex complaints within this timescale. 55% of frontline complaints were resolved within the first 5 days, 23% took more than 20 days to resolve. The average time taken on stage 1 complaints was 14 days.

8 For second stage complaints the objective is to report the outcome of the investigation to the complainant within 20 working days. During the period there were 8 stage 2 investigations of which 2 (25%) took over 20 days to resolve. The average response time was 22 days.

Outcomes

9 In terms of outcomes of stage 1 complaints, 40% were Partially Upheld, 23% Upheld and 25% Not Upheld. A small percentage (10%) were withdrawn and 1% were referred to stage 2 (table 5).

10 At stage 2 there were 3 cases Not Upheld, and 2 cases each being Upheld and Partially Upheld. 1 case was withdrawn (table 6).

Lessons learnt

11 As part of the reporting process, areas are requested to reflect on the outcomes of individual complaints and consider whether any lessons can be learnt. Out of the 77 stage 1 cases, 23 suggested some lessons that should be learnt from the complaint. As a result of these suggestions the University will be aiming to implement improvements in the following areas:

- continuing to improve communications with students, particularly in relation to ensuring everyone is informed about any changes that have been made;
- continuing to improve the clarity of guidelines and keeping these up-to-date;
- ensuring a consistent high standard of customer service is maintained.

12 Similar themes were also reflected in the outcomes of the stage 2 complaints.

Assessment of compliance

13 The new complaints handling procedure has been successfully introduced and there is a good understanding and engagement with the procedure across the University. Further work is ongoing in relation to training key personnel.

14 There are improvements to be made in terms of the number of days taken to respond to requests. It is acknowledged that there will always be some cases that take longer to resolve due to their complexities or other time constraints that cannot be controlled but the University will be working to reduce the number of days taken to resolve complaints where possible.

15 There is no record of any complaints during 2013/14 having been referred to SPSO.

Table 1: Total number of Complaints received

	Stage 1		Stage 2		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1 Aug 2013 - 31 Oct 2013	14	88%	2	13%	16	100%
1 Nov 2013 - 31 Jan 2014	22	92%	2	8%	24	100%
1 Feb 2014 - 30 Apr 2014	25	96%	1	4%	26	100%
1 May 2014 - 31 Jul 2014	16	84%	3	16%	19	100%
Total	77	91%	8	9%	85	100%

Table 2: Number of days taken to resolve Stage 1 complaints

	Number of days											
	0-5		6-10		11-15		16-20		>20		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1 Aug 2013 - 31 Oct 2013	4	29%	2	14%	0	0%	0	0%	8	57%	14	100%
1 Nov 2013 - 31 Jan 2014	12	55%	1	5%	1	5%	2	9%	6	27%	22	100%
1 Feb 2014 - 30 Apr 2014	12	48%	6	24%	3	12%	0	0%	4	16%	25	100%
1 May 2014 - 31 Jul 2014	14	88%	1	6%	1	6%	0	0%	0	0%	16	100%
Total	42	55%	10	13%	5	6%	2	3%	18	23%	77	100%

Table 3: Number of days taken to resolve Stage 2 complaints

	Number of days											
	0-5		6-10		11-15		16-20		>20		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1 Aug 2013 - 31 Oct 2013	0	0%	0	0%	1	50%	1	50%	0	0%	2	100%
1 Nov 2013 - 31 Jan 2014	0	0%	2	100%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	2	100%
1 Feb 2014 - 30 Apr 2014	0	0%	0	0%	1	100%	0	0%	0	0%	1	100%
1 May 2014 - 31 Jul 2014	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	33%	2	67%	3	100%
Total	0	0%	2	25%	2	25%	2	25%	2	25%	8	100%

Table 4: Average number of days taken to resolve Stage 1 & Stage 2 complaints

	Average resolution in working days	
	Stage 1	Stage 2
1 Aug 2013 - 31 Oct 2013	31	17
1 Nov 2013 - 31 Jan 2014	15	9
1 Feb 2014 - 30 Apr 2014	10	12
1 May 2014 - 31 Jul 2014	3	39
Average for year	14	22

Table 5: Outcome of Stage 1 complaints

	Upheld		Not Upheld		Partially Upheld		Withdrawn		Referred to Stage 2		Outstanding		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1 Aug 2013 - 31 Oct 2013	2	14%	4	29%	6	43%	2	14%	0	0%	0	0%	14	100%
1 Nov 2013 - 31 Jan 2014	1	5%	3	14%	14	64%	4	18%	0	0%	0	0%	22	100%
1 Feb 2014 - 30 Apr 2014	8	32%	8	32%	6	24%	2	8%	1	4%	0	0%	25	100%
1 May 2014 - 31 Jul 2014	7	44%	4	25%	5	31%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	16	100%
Total	18	23%	19	25%	31	40%	8	10%	1	1%	0	0%	77	100%

Table 6: Outcome of Stage 2 complaints

	Upheld		Not Upheld		Partially Upheld		Withdrawn		Outstanding		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1 Aug 2013 - 31 Oct 2013	1	50%	1	50%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	2	100%
1 Nov 2013 - 31 Jan 2014	0	0%	1	50%	0	0%	1	50%	0	0%	2	100%
1 Feb 2014 - 30 Apr 2014	1	100%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	100%
1 May 2014 - 31 Jul 2014	0	0%	1	33%	2	67%	0	0%	0	0%	3	100%
Total	2	25%	3	38%	2	25%	1	13%	0	0%	8	100%