



University
of Dundee

Complaints Handling Procedure

Annual Report to the SPSO

2019/2020

Date approved: Student Governance Oversight Group - 13 May 2021
Senate - 26 May 2021

1. INTRODUCTION

The University's Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP) involves up to two stages for resolution of a complaint - Stage 1 (Frontline Resolution) to be handled within 5 working days and Stage 2 (Investigation) to be handled within 20 working days of receiving a complaint. Any person who remains dissatisfied following Stage 2 (Investigation) can take their complaint to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) for consideration. Our CHP can be found at:

<http://www.dundee.ac.uk/governance/dca/complaints/>

The University also provides quarterly statistical information on their website at:

<http://www.dundee.ac.uk/governance/dca/monitoringstatistics/>

This annual report has been approved by the University's Student Governance Oversight Group and also the Senatus Academicus. It contains key performance indicators for the period 1 August 2019 - 31 July 2020.

If you have any questions regarding this report, or any other complaint matter, please email the following address:

complaintsresolution@dundee.ac.uk

Alternatively, please contact Karen Stulka, Compliance Manager (Student), Legal, k.f.stulka@dundee.ac.uk on (01382) 384011.

2. COMPLAINTS RECEIVED

During 2019/20, the University received 90 complaints. Of these, 72 complaints were dealt with at stage 1 (frontline) and 18 complaints were dealt with at stage 2 (investigation). From the 18 complaints dealt with at stage 2, 17 complaints had been dealt with initially at stage 1. Charts 1 and 2 show the number of complaints handled each quarter and the percentage of total complaints received at both stage 1 and stage 2.

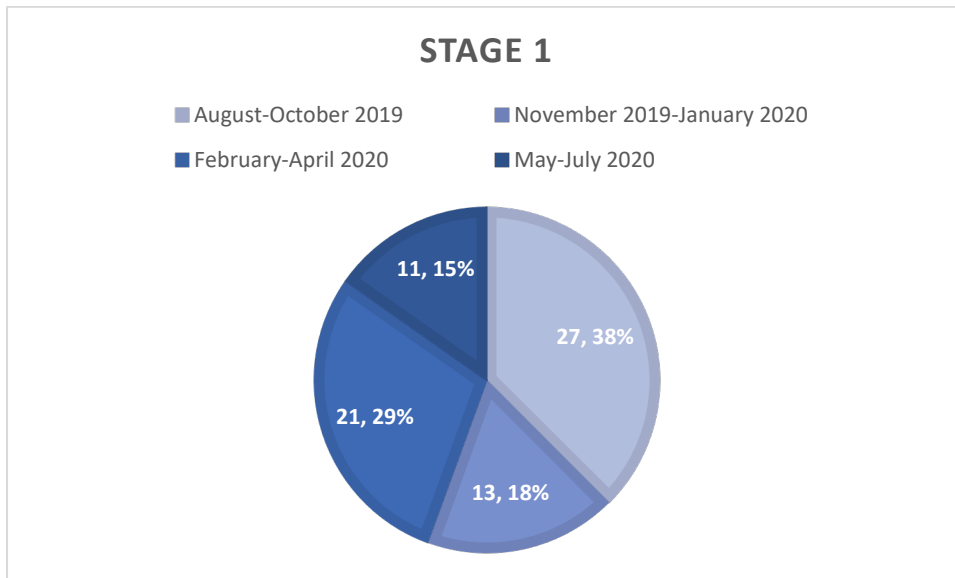


Chart 1 - Total number and percentage of stage 1 complaints received

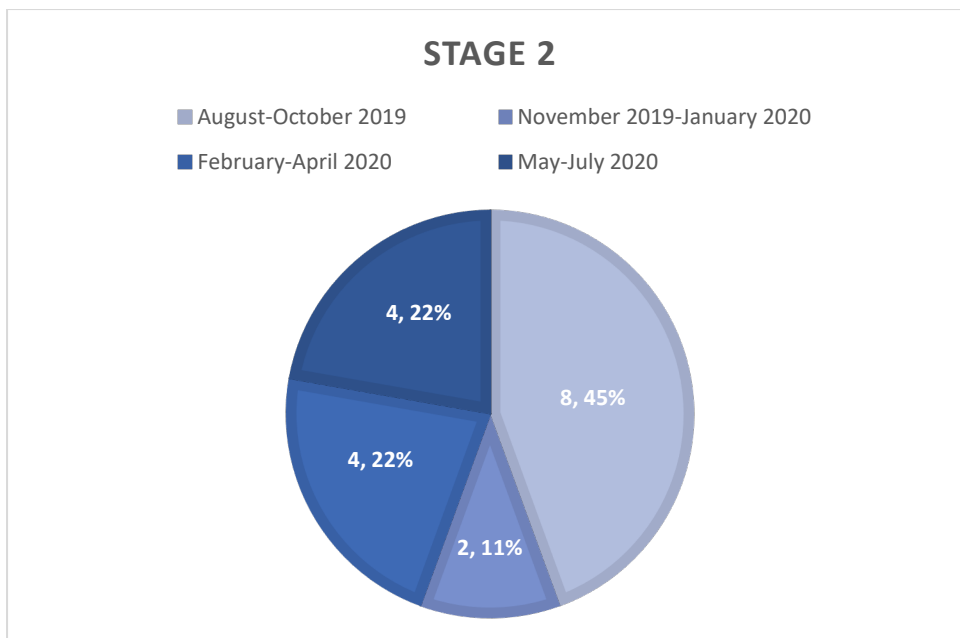


Chart 2 - Total number and percentage of stage 2 complaints received

The following table shows the number and percentage of complaints closed at Stage 1 (within the 5 day timescale) and Stage 2 (within the 20 day timescale). However, it should be noted that a total of 59 Stage 1 complaints were closed within 10 working days (82%).

| Stage | Total complaints | Number closed within SPSO time limits | Percentage closed within SPSO time limits |
|---------|------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| Stage 1 | 72 | 39 | 54.2% of all stage 1 complaints |
| Stage 2 | 18 | 11 | 61.1% of all stage 2 complaints |

3. AVERAGE TIME TAKEN TO RESOLVE A COMPLAINT

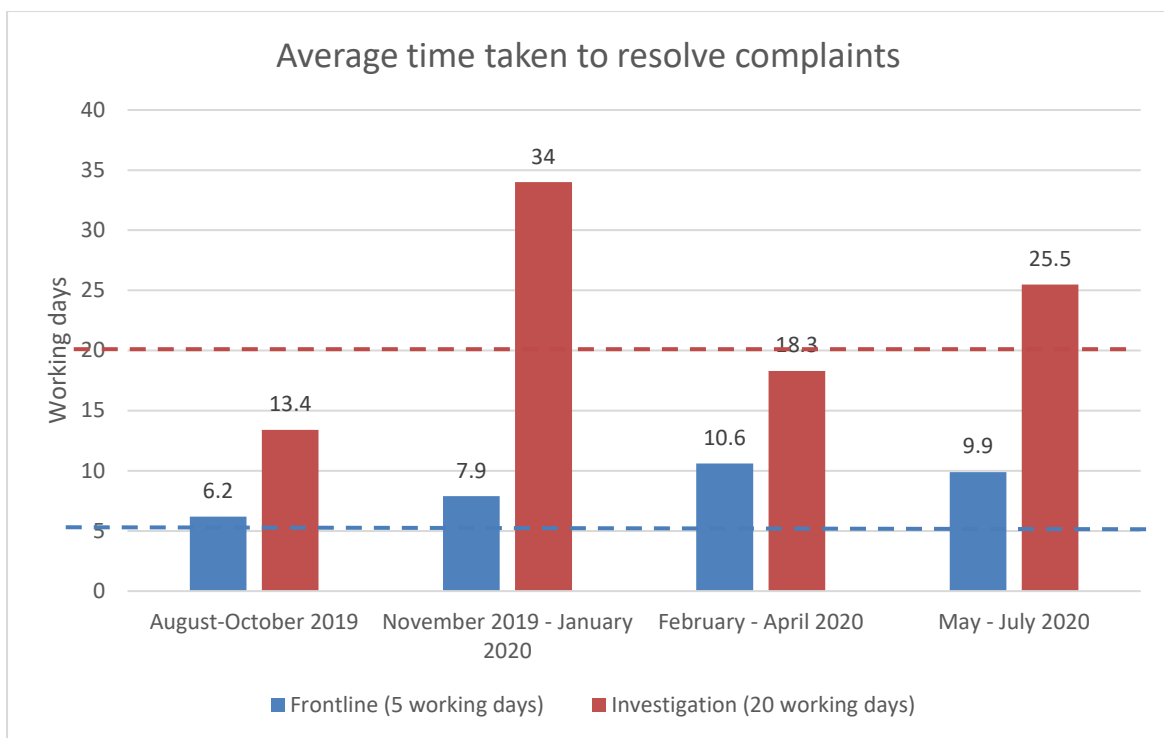


Chart 3 - Average time taken to resolve complaints

Average time periods for both stage 1 and stage 2 complaints have remained similar to 2018/19. This is an issue which will be addressed at future complaint training sessions in the hope to bring the average times to within the SPSO time limits.

However, overall, most complaints were dealt with within the SPSO time limits. The longer average times were due to a small number of complaints taking more than the stated times. The main reasons for some of the longer times included:

- non-engagement by the complainant or members of staff;
- annual leave;

- more complex cases which also involved Human Resources and senior staff within the University; or
- the complaint was outwith the jurisdiction of the CHP but still required a response.

The following table shows the number and percentage of complaints where an extension to the stage 2 working day time limit had been authorised. In these cases, the complaints investigator remained in contact with the complainant.

| Stage | Number of complaints dealt with where an extension was authorised | Percentage of complaints dealt with where an extension was authorised |
|---------|---|---|
| Stage 2 | 8 | 44.4% of all stage 2 complaints |

4. NATURE OF COMPLAINTS RECEIVED

Chart 4 shows the nature of complaints received at each stage. This year saw a large rise in the number of stage 1 complaints regarding fees or finance issues. This was due to industrial action and moving teaching online due to the covid pandemic. The next largest number of complaints received at stage 1 were regarding staff/student conduct or admissions/fee status. Staff/student conduct or admissions/fee status were also the largest number of complaints considered at stage 2.

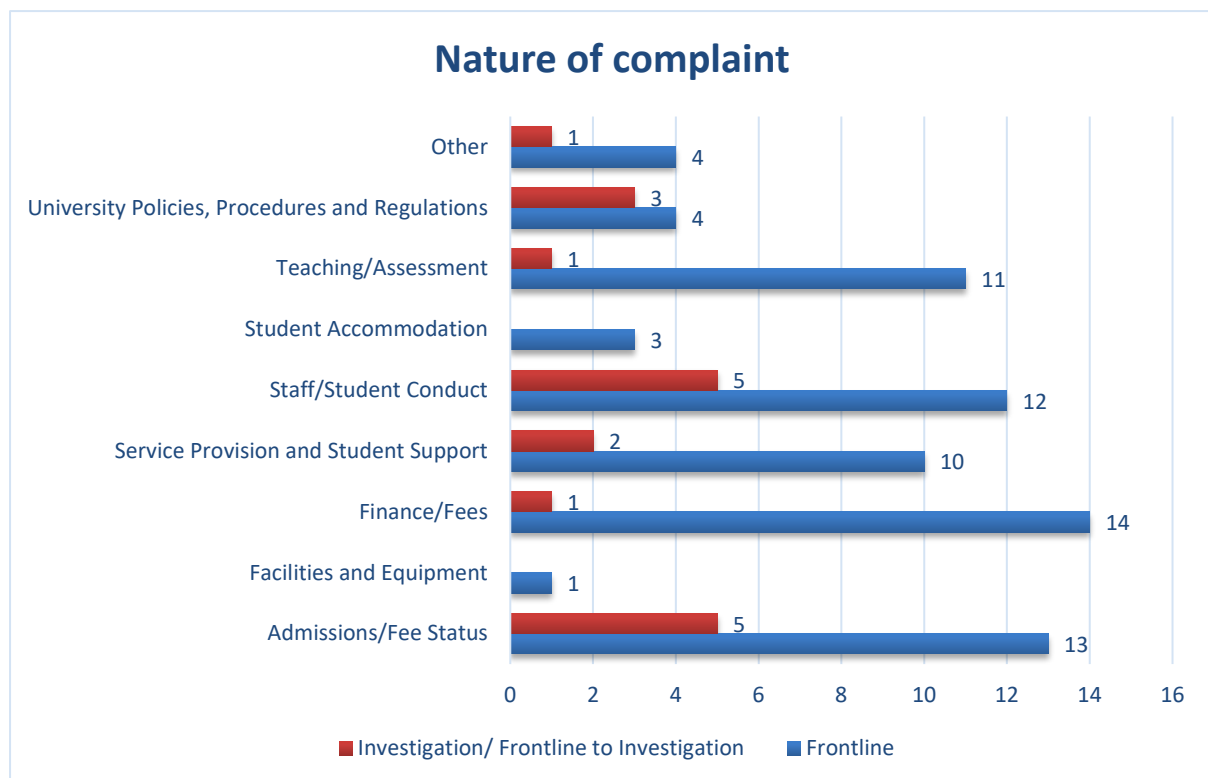


Chart 4 - Nature of complaints dealt with at stage 1 and stage 2

5. OUTCOME OF COMPLAINTS

Chart 5 shows the outcome of complaints at each stage. This year saw a rise in the percentage of stage 2 complaints upheld or partially upheld and a reduction in the percentage of those not upheld.

This year has also seen a rise in the number of complaints received which were not taken forward under the CHP. A large proportion of these cases were where complainants were only looking for a refund of fees. In these cases, an explanation was also given as to why we would not give a refund and an opportunity to speak with someone in the relevant School was offered.

Following completion of stage 2, there were five complainants who remained dissatisfied and took their complaints to the SPSO. All five of these complaints were not taken further by the SPSO.

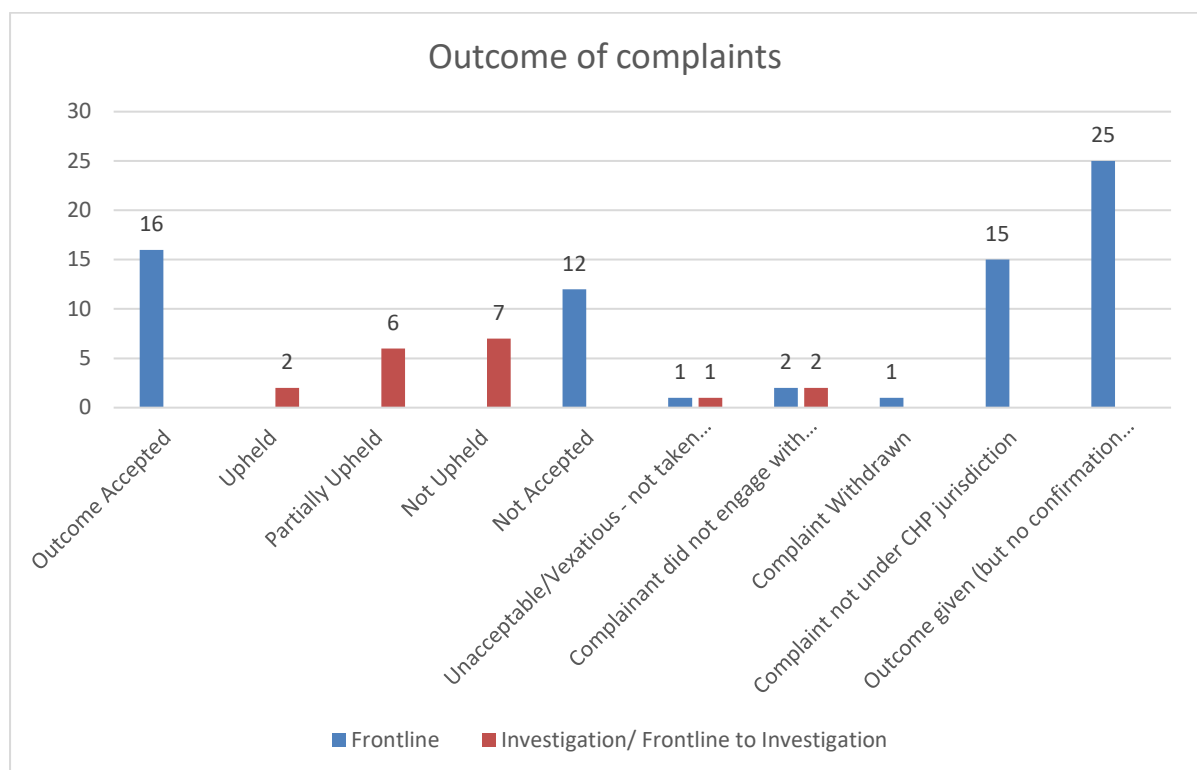


Chart 5 - Outcome of complaints

The following table shows the above data as percentages of the total complaints closed at each stage.

| | Stage 1 - 72 complaints | Stage 2 - 18 complaints |
|------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Outcome Accepted | 22.2% | N/A |
| Upheld | N/A | 11.1% |

| | | |
|--|-------|-------|
| Partially Upheld | N/A | 33.3% |
| Not Upheld | N/A | 38.9% |
| Not Accepted | 16.6% | N/A |
| Unacceptable/Vexatious - not taken forward | 1.4% | 5.6% |
| Resolved (no confirmation received) | 34.7% | N/A |
| Withdrawn | 1.4% | N/A |
| Complaint not under CHP | 20.8% | N/A |
| Complaint closed (non engagement with process) | 2.8% | 11.1% |

6. LESSONS LEARNED

In terms of the University's Vision we are committed to shaping our actions and decisions around a set of core values. These values are critical to our complaints handling process. They are to value people, to work together, to have integrity in what we do, to endeavour to make a difference and to have excellence at the heart of our interactions with others. During 2019/20 a number of complaints resulted in the University looking at lessons which could be learnt. These included:

| You Said | We Did |
|--|--|
| Wording on websites were not always as clear and understandable as they could be | Appropriate websites updated and in some cases an apology was given to the complainant |
| Concerns about the room booking timetable and times between classes | Reminder sent to staff about their responsibilities with the room booking process |
| Complaint about no longer producing a catalogue for annual shows | To ensure relevant students are consulted in discussions in future |
| Concerns about styles of communication | Remind staff of appropriate tone and language to use when communicating |
| Issues of poor communication and lack of timely responses | Remind staff of the importance of clear communication |

7. TRENDS

The chart below shows the number of complaints dealt with at frontline, investigation and overall since the CHP was introduced in 2013. Headlines this year are:

- 2019/20 saw our highest number of recorded complaints since the CHP was implemented in 2013 with 90 in total.
- As a percentage, the difference between the total complaints recorded in 2018/19 and 2019/20 is a 25% increase.
- This increase in complaint numbers may be attributed to better training, better recording of complaints, more visibility of the complaints procedure or the introduction of an online complaint form during the 2019/20 session.

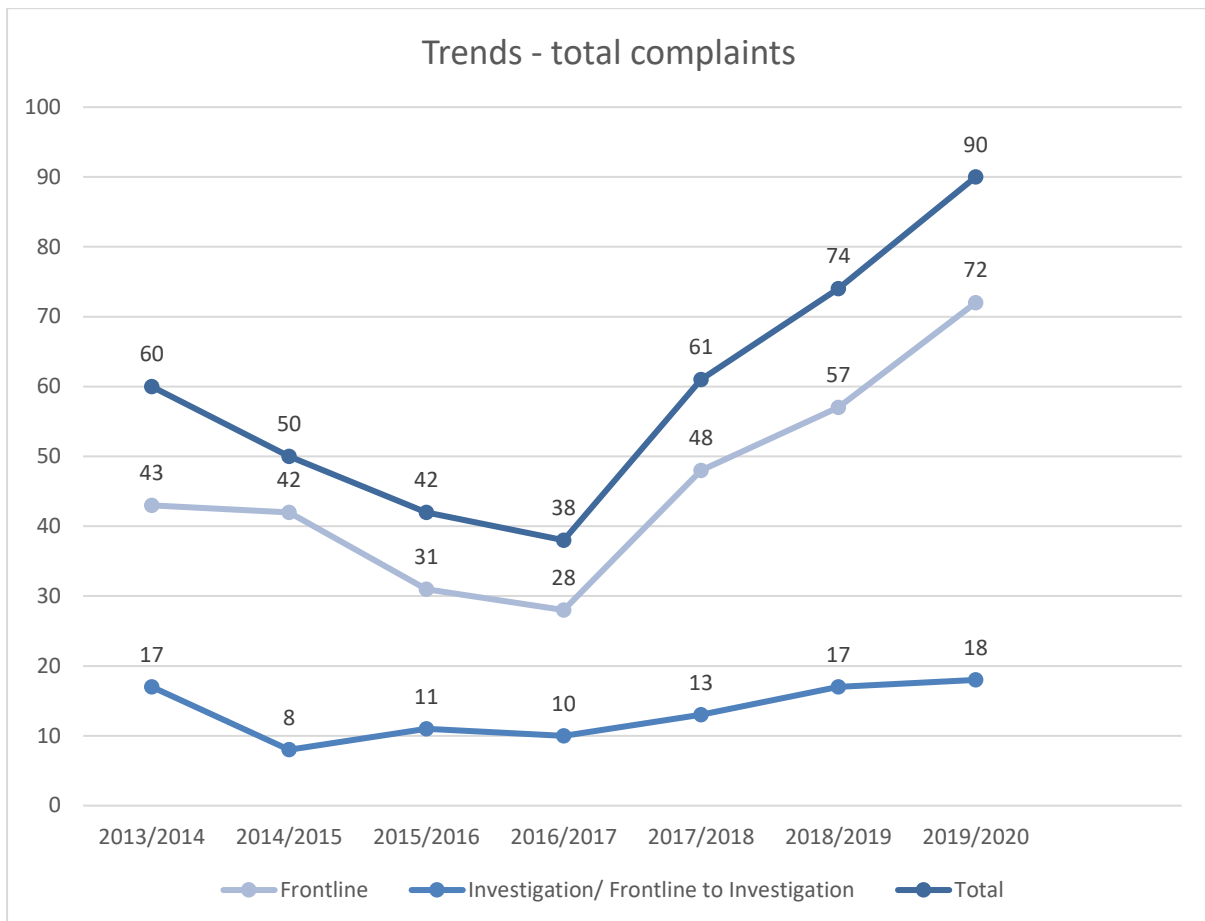


Chart 6 - Trends in number of complaints