



University  
of Dundee

# Complaints Handling Procedure

## Annual Report to the SPSO

### 2018/2019

Date approved:

Student Governance Oversight Group - 24/1/2020  
Senate - 5 February 2020

## 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 2018 - 31 July 2019.

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

[complaintsresolution@dundee.ac.uk](mailto:complaintsresolution@dundee.ac.uk)

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

## 2. COMPLAINTS RECEIVED

During 2018/19, the University received 74 complaints. Of these, 57 complaints were dealt with at stage 1 (frontline) and 17 complaints were dealt with at stage 2 (investigation). From the 17 complaints dealt with at stage 2, 13 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.

### Stage 1 complaints

■ August-October 2018 ■ November 2018-January 2019 ■ February-April 2019 ■ May-July 2019

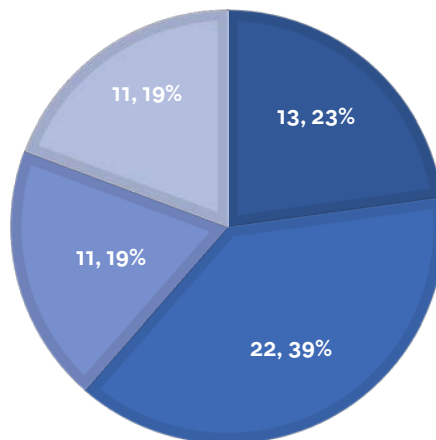


Chart 1 - Total number and percentage of stage 1 complaints received

### Stage 2 complaints

■ August-October 2018 ■ November 2018-January 2019  
■ February-April 2019 ■ May-July 2019

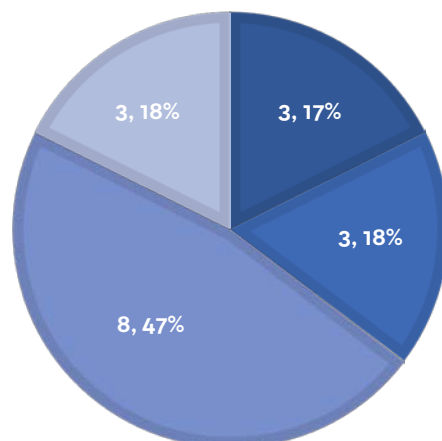


Chart 2 - Total number and percentage of stage 2 complaints received

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 43 Stage 1 complaints were closed within 10 working days (75.4%).

Stage	Total complaints	Number closed within SPSO time limits	Percentage closed within SPSO time limits
Stage 1	57	32	56.1% of all stage 1 complaints
Stage 2	17	10	58.8% of all stage 2 complaints

### 3. AVERAGE TIME TAKEN TO RESOLVE A COMPLAINT

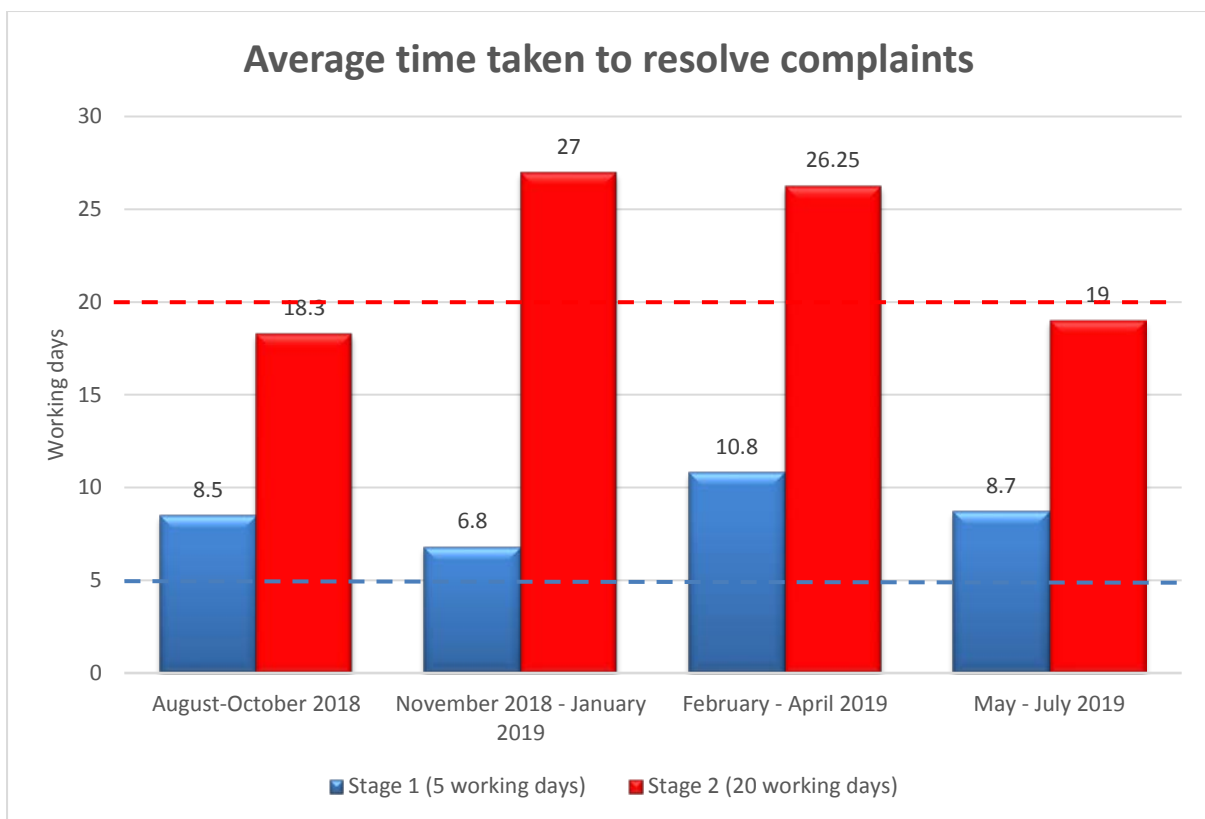


Chart 3 - Average time taken to resolve complaints

Average time periods for stage 2 complaints have reduced since 2017/18. The University has changed the way complaints are triaged through the Compliance Manager (Student) during this period and this reduction appears to directly correlate with this change and dedicated training and awareness raising provided by the Compliance Manager.

The Compliance Manager has also created a network of trained complaints investigators within the University and complaints champions. A further 15 complaints

investigators were trained during the reporting period . The University now has a pool of 29 complaints investigators.

The average figures for stage 1 have improved slightly this academic year. However the average times are still over the SPSO’s time limit of 5 working days. This is due to a small number of complaints taking more than the extended timescales of 10 working days to complete. The main reasons for some of the longer times included:

- the complaint involved speaking to staff within Schools or Directorates who were unavailable at the time of the complaint;
- annual leave; or
- non-engagement by the complainant.

The following table shows the number and percentage of complaints where an extension to the stage 1/stage 2 working day time limit had been authorised. In these cases, the complaints handler/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 1	7	28% of all stage 1 complaints taking longer than 5 working days and  50% of all stage 1 complaints taking longer than 10 working days
Stage 2	4	66.7% of all stage 2 complaints taking longer than 20 working days

#### 4. NATURE OF COMPLAINTS RECEIVED

Charts 4 and 5 show the nature of complaints received at each stage (including number and percentage). As in previous years, the largest number of complaints received at stage 1 were regarding staff/student conduct or teaching/assessment. This is not the case at stage 2 where the largest number of complaints were regarding Admissions.

### Stage 1 complaints

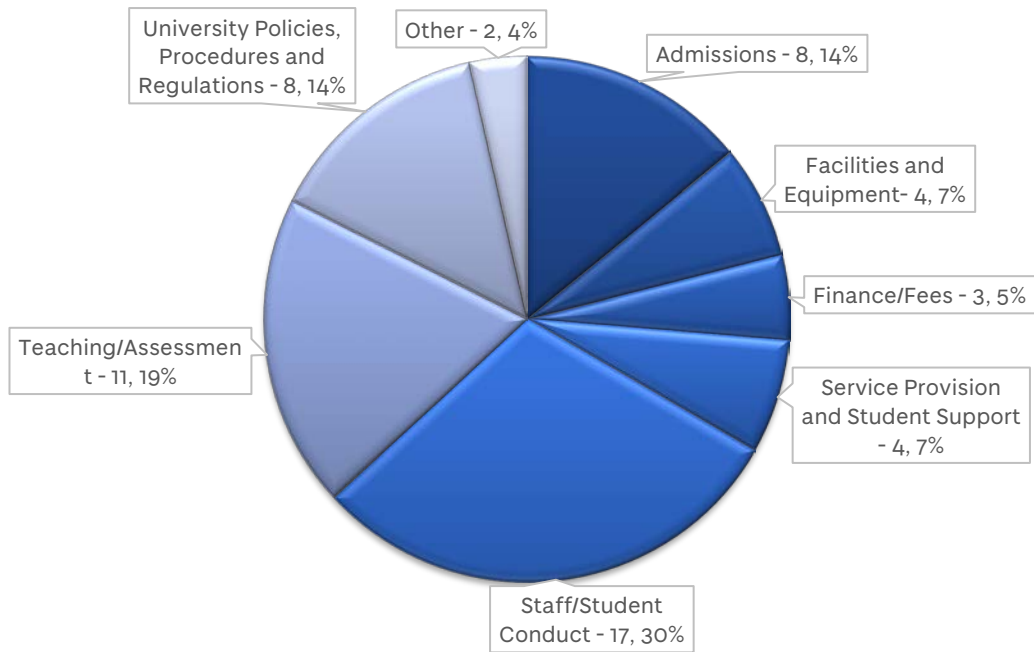


Chart 4 - Nature of complaints dealt with at stage 1

### Stage 2 complaints

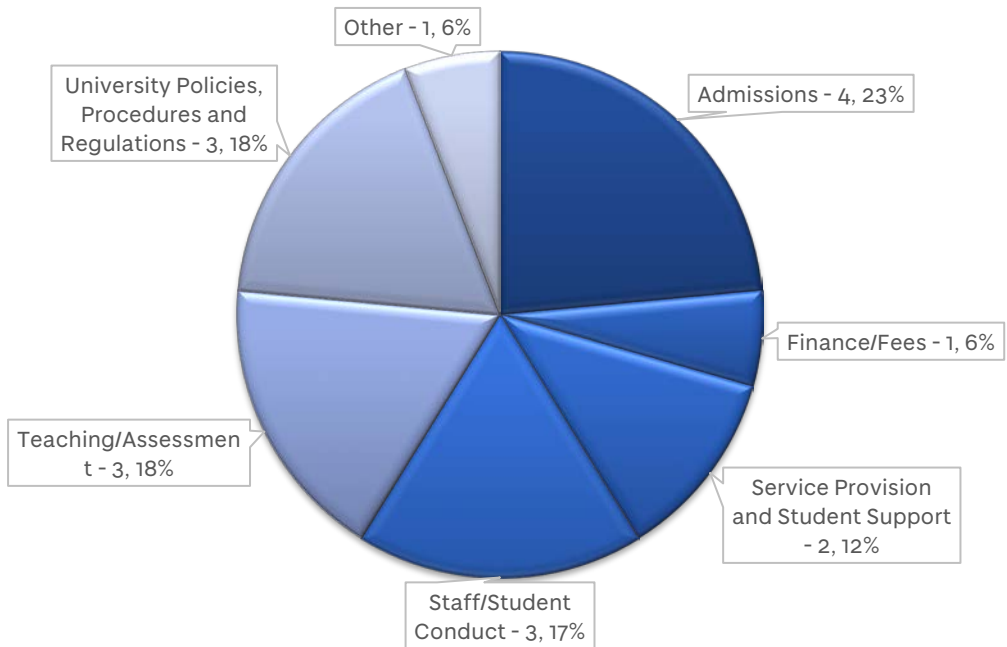


Chart 5 - Nature of complaints dealt with at stage 2

## 5. OUTCOME OF COMPLAINTS

Chart 6 shows the outcome of complaints at each stage. Although the chart shows that 15 complaints were not accepted at stage 1, only 13 complainants asked to have their complaints consider under stage 2.

Following completion of stage 2, there were 4 complainants who remained dissatisfied and took their complaints to the SPSO during 2018/19. All four of these complaints were not taken further by the SPSO.

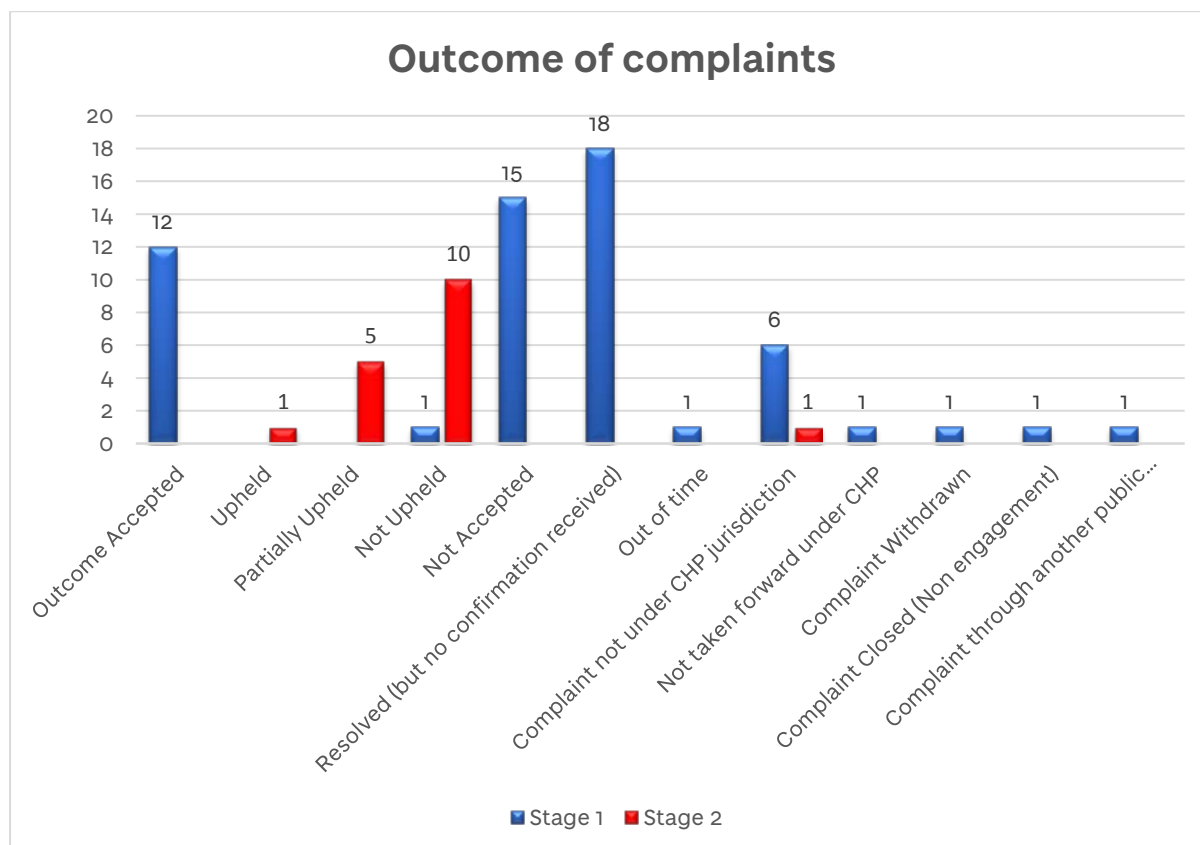


Chart 6 - Outcome of complaints

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

	Stage 1 - 57 complaints	Stage 2 - 17 complaints
Outcome Accepted	21%	N/A
Upheld	N/A	6%
Partially Upheld	N/A	29%
Not Upheld	2%	59%
Not Accepted	26%	N/A

Resolved (no confirmation received)	32%	N/A
Withdrawn	2%	N/A
Complaint out of time	2%	N/A
Complaint not under CHP	11%	6%
Complaint closed (non engagement with process)	2%	N/A
Complaint through another public sector	2%	N/A

## 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 2018/19 a number of complaints resulted in the University looking at lessons which could be learnt. These included:

You Said	We Did
Complaints about inappropriate staff behaviour	Further training put in place for staff members
Concerns about implementation of reasonable adjustments in Computer Marked Assessments (CMAs)	An institutional review of CMAs is currently underway
Complaint about changing the format of exam paper thereby not giving students the opportunity to practice prior to the exam	To ensure that students are given the opportunity to practice, prior to an exam, where exam paper formats are changed
Issues with changes to academic requirements	Policies updated for clarity
Concerns about outlines of module programmes on website	Recommendations made to update the website to make it clearer and to include links to detailed descriptor of the module
Concern about the procedure for withdrawing from studies	Recommendations made to review withdrawal procedures across the University



## 7. TRENDS

The chart below shows the number of complaints dealt with at stage 1, stage 2 and overall since the CHP was introduced in 2013. Headlines this year are:

- 2018/19 saw our highest number of recorded complaints since the CHP was implemented in 2013 with 74 in total.
- 2018/19 also saw our largest number of stage 1 complaints (57) and joint largest number of stage 2 complaints (17).
- As a percentage, the difference between the total complaints recorded in 2017/18 and 2018/19 is a 21.3% increase.
- This increase in complaint numbers may be attributed to better training, better recording of complaints or students feeling more comfortable raising issues and looking for redress.
- The University has responded to this increase in complaints by providing better training and widening the pool of stage 2 complaints investigators.

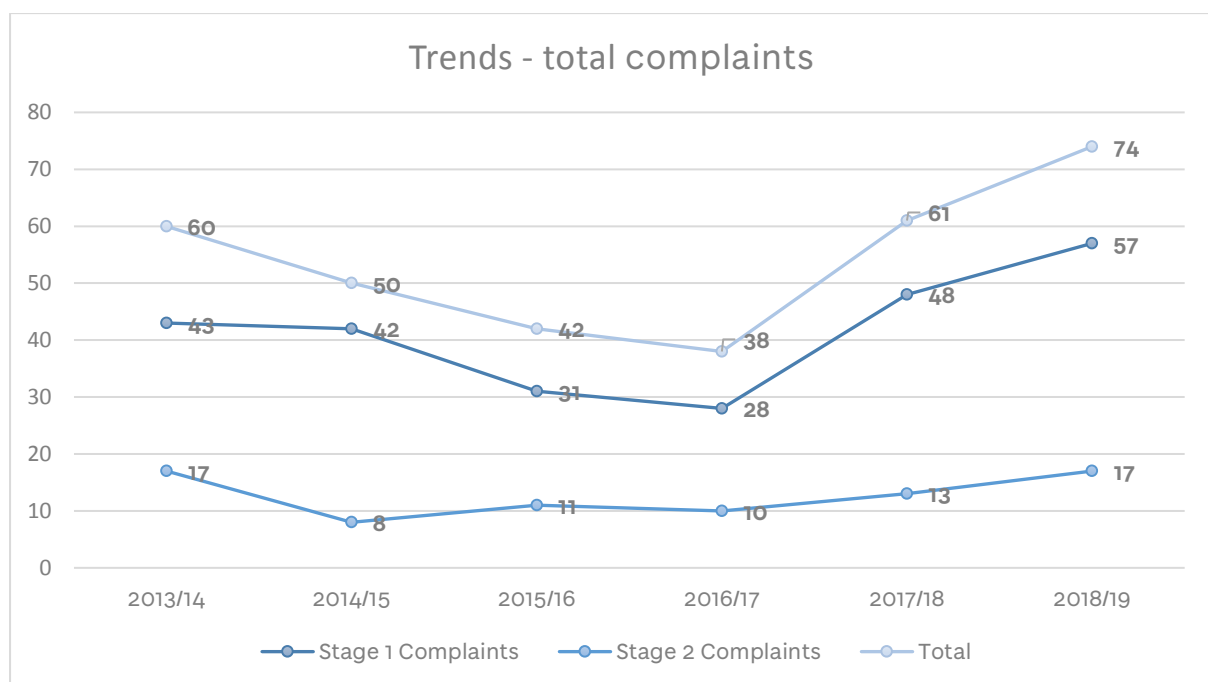


Chart 7 - Trends in number of complaints