

UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW

Annual Report on Complaints to the University: Academic Session 2013-14

This is a report on complaints raised with the University during academic session 2013-14 which covers complaints from students and other service users received between August 2013 and July 2014. It does not cover staff grievances or student issues covered by other processes such as academic appeals or student conduct.

In August 2013 the University introduced a revised complaints procedure which is based on the Model Complaints Handling Procedure (MCHP) for Higher Education issued by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO).

Further detail on our complaints procedure is available at <http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/senateoffice/studentcodes/students/complaints/>

Complaints Activity in 2013-14

Complaint Numbers

Overall, **the University received fewer than 6 complaints per 1000 students** in 2013-14.

112 complaints were considered at frontline resolution with 98 of these being closed at this stage. There were 46 complaint investigations, in some cases more than one complainant had raised concerns about the issue investigated.

Table 1 – Frontline Resolution

Frontline Complaints (Stage 1)	
Complaints Closed at Stage 1	98
Upheld (or in Upheld in part) and closed at Stage 1	51 (52%)
Completed within 5 working days and closed at Stage 1	59 (60%)

Table 2 – Complaint Investigations

Stage 2 Complaints (full investigation)	
No. of investigations*	46
Upheld (or Upheld in part)	17 (38%)
Completed within 20 working days	16 (35%)
Authorised extensions beyond 20 working days	30

*Includes frontline complaints referred on to Stage 2.

Table 3: Categories of Complaint

Complaint Category	Stage 1	Stage 2
Accommodation (residential)	5	2
Administration	22	8
Admissions	16	9
Fees/Grants/Bursaries/Finance	10	10
Harassment/Bullying/Discrimination	4	4
Non-teaching infrastructure	1	1
Teaching/Supervision	27	16
Teaching Infrastructure	7	19
Welfare/Student Support and Advice/Special Needs	13	6
Other	32	3
	137	78

Complaints were identified as falling within the above categories. In some cases complainants considered their complaint to cover more than one issue, so the number of categories identified exceeds the total number of complaints received.

Process Improvement

Many complaint investigations identified improvements to avoid recurrence of issues raised, and to enhance the University's service provision. There were 77 recommendations relating to service improvement made at the conclusion of the Stage 2 investigations during 2013-14.

The majority of these were in the following areas:

- Fees, Grants, Bursaries and Finance;
- Admissions;
- Welfare, Student Support and Advice and Special Needs;
- Teaching Infrastructure.

The following actions are examples of those that have been taken to improve our service:

- Provision of specialist financial administration support on the Student Services Enquiry Team during the 2014-15 registration period to improve advice and query resolution for students;
- Electronic financial query handling improved with the introduction of new software and a 'one click' email tool to ensure all queries are captured and disseminated quickly to relevant staff teams for action;
- Improved online administrative procedures for student refunds to ensure effective operation in cases where the refund and direct debit accounts differ;
- A review of training provision for Advisers of Studies to ensure that the pastoral/support aspect of the role is appropriately understood and provision of update/refresher sessions for existing advisers;
- Administrative coordination to improve staff understanding of the central room booking process and central timetabling practice. Transfer of some booking responsibility to local areas to ensure appropriate rooms are booked for teaching;
- Discontinuation of use of temporary teaching accommodation found not to be fit for purpose.

Complainant Satisfaction

14 of the complainants who raised issues at frontline sought a full investigation of their complaint after receiving the initial outcome at Stage 1. Four of these investigations upheld the complaint at least partially. The small number of referrals on to Stage 2 (14 out of 112) indicates an effective level of frontline resolution and complainant satisfaction with their case.

Feedback in terms of complainant satisfaction with the complaints service provided has been limited. In one case, a complainant identified an aspect of procedure at investigation stage which had not been correctly followed, and steps were taken to address this for future cases.

**Senate Office
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