

UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW

Annual Report on Complaints to the University: Academic Session 2017-18

This report covers complaints raised with the University between 1 August 2017 and 31 July 2018. It does not cover staff grievances or student issues covered by other processes such as academic appeals or student conduct.

The University's complaints procedure 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:

<https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/senateoffice/policies/calendar/calendar2017-18/feesandgeneral/complaints/reg29/>

Complaints Activity in 2017-18

Complaint Numbers

With over 27,000 students, the University received **an average of 7 complaints per 1000 students** in 2017-18.

123 complaints were considered at frontline resolution with 99 of these being closed at this stage. Twenty-four cases were escalated from Stage 1 to Stage 2, which is higher than in previous years. Sixty cases were eligible for investigation under Stage 2 of the Complaints Procedure. The number of investigations at Stage 2 received during the reporting period represents a slight decline from 2016-17. In addition to the 60 investigations, a further 12 cases were received but did not progress to investigation.

Table 1 – Frontline Resolution

Frontline Complaints (Stage 1)	
Complaints considered at Stage 1	123
Upheld (or in Upheld in part)*	
Completed within 5 working days*	

Table 2 – Complaint Investigations

Stage 2 Complaints (full investigation)	
No. of investigations*	60
No. of investigations completed**	54
Upheld (or Upheld in part)	23
Completed within 20 working days***	2

* Includes frontline complaints referred on to Stage 2.

** Five of the 60 cases were withdrawn part way through the process and in one further case the file was closed, prior to conclusion, as the complainant did not engage with the process.

*** 38 28 of the 60 investigations were categorised as complex and therefore could not be completed within 20 working days. Extensions were granted for all complaints completed beyond the 20 working day deadline.

Table 3: Categories of Complaint at Stages 1 and 2

Complaint Category (complaints may cover multiple categories)	Stage 1	Stage 2
Residential Accommodation	10	8
Administration	21	7
Admissions	12	2
Fees/Grants/Bursaries/Finance	14	3
Harassment/Bullying/Discrimination	0	6
Teaching and Supervision	44	27
Welfare/Student Support and Advice	7	13
Teaching infrastructure (library, facilities)	7	0
Non-teaching infrastructure (clubs, campus)	3	0
Other	18	1

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. In total, there were 168 recommendations made during 2017-18 relating to service improvement.

The highest number of service improvement recommendations were made under Programme Guidance/Review and Teaching and Student Welfare/Student Support, illustrating that the majority of improvements are directly linked to the student experience. Colleges, Schools or University Services are alerted to the recommendations made by Investigating Officers and are required to report on their progress. The majority of these were in the following areas:

- Programme Guidance and Review
- Teaching
- Student Welfare/Student Support
- Communication
- Policy adherence/review
- Accommodation

Twenty-four Stage 2 investigations made recommendations to remedy the concerns raised. The majority of these were for apologies regarding the upheld aspects of a complaint, however a variety of remedies were applied including;

- academic remedies, such as an extension for an assignment
- a small number of financial remedies were made, such as an offer of a different credit bearing course at no cost to the student.

Complainant Satisfaction

Twenty-four of the complainants who raised issues at frontline sought a full investigation of their complaint after receiving the initial outcome at Stage 1. The small number of referrals on to Stage 2 (24 out of 123) indicates an effective level of frontline resolution and complainant satisfaction with their case. In 2017-18 five cases were referred to the SPSO.