

University of Edinburgh

Complaint Report, Academic Year 2022-23

During the 12-month period 1 August 2022 to 31 July 2023, the University recorded a total of 486 complaints.

1. Introduction

The University's [Complaint Handling Procedure](#) (CHP), which is based on the [Model Complaint Handling Procedure](#) published by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO), has two stages.

Complaints responded to at Stage 1 complaints, often referred to as 'frontline' resolution, should receive a response within 5 working days, unless an extension is granted for good reason. The maximum response time for Stage 1 complaints is 10 working days, and if it is not possible to meet this deadline, the complaint must be referred for consideration at Stage 2. Stage 2 complaints should receive a response within 20 working days; however, there is provision within the CHP to extend this timeframe.

On 1 September 2022 the SPSO introduced four [Key Performance Indicators](#) for the Higher Education sector: this document contains the University's annual performance data, which is published in accordance with SPSO reporting requirements.

2. Stage 1 complaints

441 complaints were considered at Stage 1 of the CHP, of which 10 were subsequently escalated and received a response at Stage 2; therefore, over 97% of complaints were not progressed beyond the 'frontline' stage.

287 (65%) of the Stage 1 complaints received a full response within 5 working days, a further 68 (15%) received a response between working days 6 and 10, and 86 complaints (19%) received a response after more than 10 working days. The average response time at this stage was 8.75 working days.

Table 1, below, summarises the outcomes of Stage 1 complaints responded to during this reporting period as both a number and a percentage, where the latter is relative to the total number of Stage 1 complaints considered.

Complaint Outcome	Number (%)
Resolved [1]	37 (8%)
Fully Upheld	159 (36%)
Partially Upheld [2]	45 (10%)
Not Upheld	200 (46%)

Table 1: Stage 1 Complaints responded to by outcome.

3. Stage 2 complaints

55 complaints were considered at Stage 2 of the CHP, of which 10 had previously received a Stage 1 response. The remaining 45 complaints were taken directly to Stage 2, typically because, upon receipt, it was believed that it would not be possible to make a full response within the maximum 10 working day timeframe stipulated for Stage 1.

3.1 Complaints escalated from Stage 1 to Stage 2

Of the 10 complaints escalated to Stage 2, 3 (30%) received a full response within 20 working days, with the average response time for escalated complaints being 86 working days.

In most cases, investigation of escalated complaints took longer than 20 working days. Some delays were due to difficulty contacting the complainant, or because the investigation was put on hold at the complainant's request. Staff absence, e.g. those who need to be interviewed or are acting as investigators, can also introduce delays.

Table 2 contains information relating to the outcomes for complaints that were escalated from Stage 1 to Stage 2.

Complaint Outcome	Number (%)
Resolved [1]	0 (0%)
Fully Upheld	0 (0%)
Partially Upheld [2]	3 (30%)
Not Upheld	7 (70%)

Table 2: Outcome of complaints escalated from Stage 1 to Stage 2.

3.2 Complaints taken directly to Stage 2

40 complaints (89%) which were considered at Stage 2 from the outset received a response within the 20-working day target. 5 complaints (11%) received a response in more than 20 working days. The average response time for these complaints was 11 working days.

The number of complaints that were taken directly to Stage 2 is summarised according to outcome in Table 3.

Complaint Outcome	Number	(%)
Resolved ^[1]	1	(2%)
Fully Upheld	0	(0%)
Partially Upheld ^[2]	4	(9%)
Not Upheld	40	(89%)

Table 3: Outcome of complaints taken directly to Stage 2.

4. Complaint trends and actions taken to improve service

Due to the relatively low number of cases resolved or upheld at Stage 2, limited information can be given about trends and learning associated with these complaints. The most common theme in partially upheld complaints related to issues impacting students from the implementation of the University People and Money system. The University continues to work to address this issue and to provide updates to staff on action taken. This report does not include specific examples of learning outcomes or improvements to services made as a result of complaints considered during this reporting period, because it may be possible to identify a complainant from such information. However, examples from academic year 2014-15 onwards are published at, <https://www.ed.ac.uk/university-secretary-group/complaint-handling-procedure/procedure/complaint-handling-reports>.

[1] A complaint is resolved when both the University and the complainant agree what action (if any) will be taken to provide full and final resolution, without making a decision about whether the complaint is upheld or not upheld.

[2] Many complaints cover several issues. Where any of these are upheld, the outcome for the whole investigation is recorded as 'partially upheld'.