

Complaints Handling Procedure Annual Report 2016-17

Background

1. The Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 gave the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) responsibilities and powers, specifically, to oversee the development of model Complaints Handling Procedures (CHPs) for each sector including higher education. The main aims of the model CHP are early resolution of a complaint as close to the point of contact as possible and making best use of lessons learned from complaints.
2. All Scottish universities were required to adopt the two stage model CHP by 30 August 2013. Following the internal approval of a suitable procedure by Court, on the recommendation of Senate, the University implemented the current CHP on 27 August 2013. This document is publicly available here:
<https://www.strath.ac.uk/media/ps/strategyandpolicy/ComplaintsHandlingProcedure.pdf>

Recording and Reporting

3. that reports detailing key performance information are submitted quarterly to the Executive Team and annually to Court. SPSO Guidance indicates that such reports are expected to contain:
 - performance statistics detailing: the volume and types of complaints received and key performance information, e.g. on the time taken and the stage at which complaints were resolved
 - the trends and outcomes of complaints and the actions taken in response including examples to demonstrate how complaints have helped improve services
4. Annex A provides key performance information on the volume and types of complaints received during 2016/17 and on the resolution times achieved. It also provides qualitative information on some of the actions taken or recommendations made to deliver service improvement in response to complaints received by the University during 2016/17. In parallel with the introduction of the CHP in 2013, the University implemented a central recording system enabling the monitoring of complaint handling across the University and the production of statistical reports.

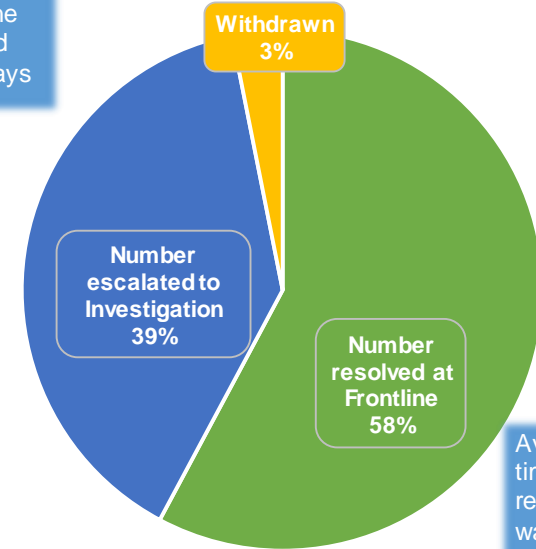
Summary Analysis

5. The University has recorded 64 complaints since the start of the 2016/17 academic year on 1 August 2016. The majority of complaints (81%) were received from students or former students of the University. The remainder of complaints received were from members of the public and prospective applicants.
6. Complaints were received across all academic faculties with two largest faculties, Humanities and Social Sciences and Engineering, each accounting for 31% of total complaints. 17% of complaints received were related to areas within Professional Services, predominantly Estates Services and Student Experience and Enhancement Services.
7. The percentage of complaints resolved at frontline improved throughout the year, with a total of 58% across the period, a significant improvement on the previous year. The relatively high percentage of complaints escalated to the investigation stage in previous years had been noted and t

8. The time taken to resolve frontline complaints fluctuated throughout the year, averaging 7 days, slightly above the 5 working day target. This represents a slight increase on the figure. However, it is likely that the increased emphasis on frontline resolution and the resulting increase in the number of complaints dealt with at frontline has had an impact here. Indeed, three frontline complaints were identified which may have been more appropriately escalated to stage 2. Discounting those three complaints brings the average resolution time down to 5.1 days, with 74% resolved within the target.
9. Complaints investigated at stage 2 of the procedure were resolved within an average of 24.8 days, slightly above the 20 working days required, which is consistent with the previous year. This resolution timeframe

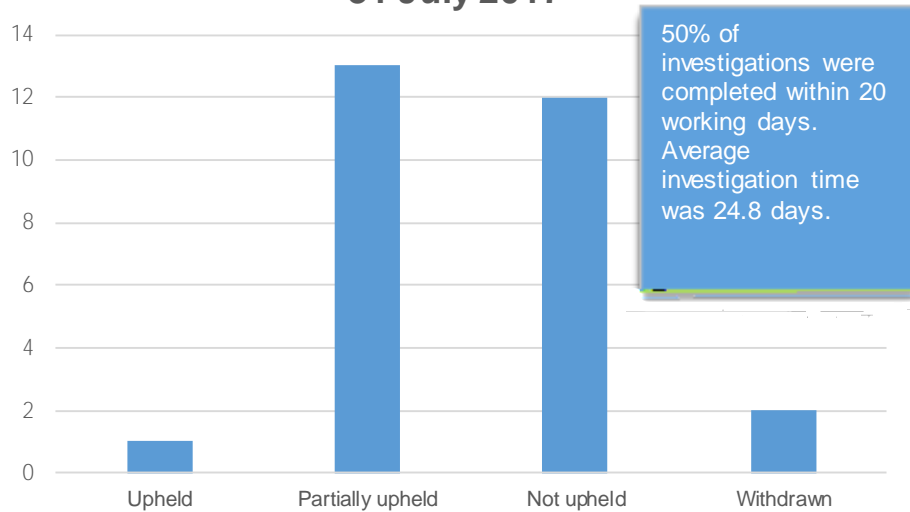
Frontline (Stage 1) - 1 August 2016 to 31 July 2017

68% of complaints resolved at Frontline stage were handled within 5 working days

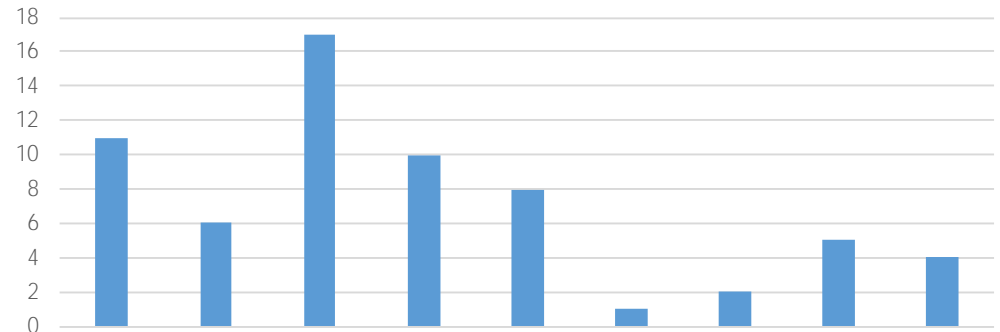


Average resolution time for complaints resolved at Frontline was 7 working days.

Investigations (Stage 2) 1 August 2016 - 31 July 2017



50% of investigations were completed within 20 working days. Average investigation time was 24.8 days.



SPSO Recommendations

During 2016/17, the following recommendations were made by the SPSO following investigation into complaints raised against the University by 2 former students.