

Board of Management Performance & Nominations Committee

Date of Meeting	Wednesday 11 August 2021
Paper No.	PNC1-F
Agenda Item	5.1
Subject of Paper	Complaint Report - August 2020 to June 2021
FOISA Status	Disclosable
Primary Contact	Jon Gray, Director of Excellence
Date of production	2 August 2021
Action	For Noting

1. Recommendations

The Committee is asked to note the contents of this report.

2. Purpose

This report presents an overview of College complaints received from August 2020 to June 2021 in advance of the College's Annual Complaint Report to be published in September 2021.

3. Background

This year, we have seen positive progress with fewer complaints received, quicker turnaround and fewer complaints were upheld.

From August 2020 to June 2021, the College received 76 complaints, 30 fewer from the same period in 2019/2020.

In accordance with the procedure, complaints are assigned a handling timeframe, determining whether they can be resolved within five days (Stage 1) or within 20 days (Stage 2). For the period covered in this report, the number of complaints received at Stage 1 dropped by 27%, from 70 to 51, when compared to the same period in 2019/20.

The majority of complaints are Course Related, with Customer Care, and Applications, Admissions and Progression the next highest areas. Covid has had a significant impact on the types of complaints received in terms of course fee refunds, online learning, wearing of face masks and other Covid protocols on campus.

Over half (53%) of all complaints received were not upheld. For those complaints that were either upheld (33%) or partially upheld (15%), actions and lessons learned are captured and shared to inform improvements to the process.

Key Observations
Total number of complaints received decreased by 28%, from 106 to 76.
Complaints escalated to Stage 2, requiring further investigation following Stage 1 resolution, decreased by 71%.
Over half (53%) of all complaints received were not upheld.
41% of complaints were Course Related matters.

We continue to report on and publish information on complaints as required by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman. The College's Annual Complaint Report for 2020/21 will be available to the College by September 2021.

4. Impact and Implications

Each complaint has an outcome, upholding or rejecting the complaint. The outcome identified informs the lessons learnt which we use to inform and enhance the student experience. A high volume of complaints tells us something about the effectiveness of our services and the student experience. Handling complaints quickly and consistently is important to the continued cohesion of the college.

Mindful of the improving picture and the plans for further enhancements to the system, there are no material risks to note at this time.

Complaint Summary August 2020 to June 2021

Complaints Received by Each Stage

Year	Stage 1	Stage 2	Escalated	Total
August 20 – June 21	51	23	2	76
August 19 – June 20	70	29	7	106

The total number of complaints received has reduced by 28% when compared to the same period in academic year 2019/20. The reduction is reflected across all complaint stages, with the greatest decrease in complaints escalated to Stage 2, requiring further investigation following Stage 1 resolution, which has fallen by 71%.

Complaint Outcomes by Stage

	Upheld	Not Upheld	Partially Upheld	Resolved	Open
Stage 1	21	28	4	0	0
Stage 2	4	12	7	0	2
Escalated	0	2	0	0	0
Total	25	42	11	0	2

There has been a significant decrease in complaints being upheld compared to the same period last year, from 49% to 33% this year. However, there have been 11 partially upheld complaints compared to zero for last year.

Over half (53%) of all complaints received were not upheld, which is consistent with the same period last year when 51% of all complaints were not upheld.

There are currently two complaints which are still open and have been suspended until academic staff return from the summer break. The complaints are course related.

Complaints Received by Faculty/Directorate

	Stage 1	Stage 2	Escalated	Total
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Creative Industries	14	7	0	21
Education & Humanities	8	5	0	13
Hospitality & Leisure	13	4	0	17
Nautical & STEM	4	7	1	12
Principal	1	0	0	1
Student Experience	1	0	1	2
Finance & HR	1	0	0	1
Infrastructure	9	0	0	9
Corporate Development	0	0	0	0
Total	51	23	2	76

The Faculty of Creative Industries received the highest number of complaints (21) representing 28% of the total received across the College.

For Support Areas, Infrastructure (Estates, Facilities, Student Accommodations, Digital Infrastructure) received the most complaints (9), which is equivalent to 12% of the total complaints received across the College.

Complaint Categories by Faculty/Directorate and Complaint Themes within Categories

	Customer Care	Applications, Admissions, Progression	Course Related	Services	Facilities	Others
Creative Industries	6	4	8	1	0	0
Education & Humanities	2	3	8	0	0	0
Hospitality & Leisure	5	5	7	0	0	0
Nautical & STEM	4	1	7	0	0	0
Principal	0	0	1	0	0	0

Student Experience	0	0	0	2	0	0
Finance & HR	0	0	1	2	0	0
Infrastructure	3	0	0	2	2	2
Corporate Development	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	20	13	32	7	2	2

Main Themes

Customer Care: customer experience, Covid related (e.g. wearing of face mask on campus), lack of communication

Applications, Admissions, Progression: application/interview outcomes and feedback, lack of communication, withdrawals from course

Course Related: learning and teaching primarily due to online learning and the delivery of classes via Zoom, customer experience, assessment and feedback

Services: finance (payments and fees), laptop requests, Citrix access times for students

Facilities: access to drinking water on campus

Others: student conduct off campus

Action on Upheld Complaints

For any complaints where the investigation has identified a recommendation or action to improve process, the Performance Team record the identified action or recommendation. This is then monitored regularly by the Performance Team who contact the Complaint Investigation Manager or person responsible for carrying out the action or improvement, to ensure completion.

Reporting on actions or improvements to service as a result of complaint investigations will form part of the enhanced performance reporting to Faculties and Directorates ensuring greater awareness and quicker completion/implementation.

Further Improvements

Performance have been conducting a comprehensive review of the complaint handling process. This review includes the introduction of an online system with an automated workflow to record and efficiently manage complaints as well an evaluation of communication and support surrounding complaint handling.

The implementation of the online system and revised process will be in the new academic year and comprehensive training and guidance will be provided to all staff involved in complaint handling at the College.