

Board of Management

Performance & Nominations Committee

Date of Meeting	Monday 25 April 2022
Paper No.	PNC4-E
Agenda Item	5.1
Subject of Paper	Complaint Handling Update – Jan/Feb/March 2022
FOISA Status	Disclosable
Primary Contact	Jon Gray, Director of Excellence
Date of production	12 April 2022
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 January 2022 to March 2022.

Compared to the last quarter more complaints have been received, and there has been a very slight increase on the number received this time last year. A greater number of complaints were also upheld this quarter but more were also resolved, meaning the complainant was satisfied by the resolution reached. Increases reflect the disruption to learning and teaching caused by Covid, primarily in terms of the availability and continuity of teaching staff.

Complaint Summary January 2022 - March 2022

Complaints Received by Each Stage

This Year	Stage 1	Stage 2	Escalated	Total
January 22 – March 22	20	6	0	27*

Last Year	Stage 1	Stage 2	Escalated	Total
January 21 – March 21	19	5	0	24

* 1 complaint suspended and therefore not yet assigned as stage 1 or stage 2

The total number of complaints received from January – March 2022 has increased slightly by 3 (14%) when compared to the same period in academic year 2020/21. The small increase is reflected across both Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints.

Compared with last quarter, there has been an increase of 11 complaints (43%).

This Quarter	Stage 1	Stage 2	Escalated	Total
January 22 – March 22	20	6	0	27*

Last Quarter	Stage 1	Stage 2	Escalated	Total
October 21 – December 21	12	3	1	16

The increase is reflected across both Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints. There has been an increase in the number of complaints escalated to Stage 2 and requiring further investigation following Stage 1 resolution.

Complaint Outcomes by Stage – compared to last year

January – March 2022

	Upheld	Not Upheld	Partially Upheld	Resolved	Open
Stage 1	6	4	1	9	0
Stage 2*	0	3	1	0	2
Escalated	0	0	0	0	0
Total	6	7	2	9	2

* 1 complaint withdrawn

In comparison to this time last year:

- positively, there has been a decrease in the number of complaints being upheld, falling from 47% to 29%
- 2 complaints were partially upheld, compared with 3 last year

The number of complaints resolved increased - almost half of all complaints received during January – March 2022 (43%) were resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant.

Two complaints remain open and have been suspended until academic staff return from the mid-term break. The complaints are course related. One complaint is suspended awaiting the completion of a disciplinary process. This complaint has not yet been assigned to Stage 1 or Stage 2.

Complaint Outcomes by Stage – compared to last quarter

October – December 2021

	Upheld	Not Upheld	Partially Upheld	Resolved	Open
Stage 1	2	3	1	6	0
Stage 2	0	1	2	0	0
Escalated	1	0	0	0	0
Total	3	4	3	6	0

In comparison to the last quarter, October – December 2021,

- the number of complaints upheld increased by 50%

- the number of partially upheld complaints decreased from 3 to 2 complaints

Positively, the number of complaints resolved during January – March 2022 increased by 33% from October – December 2021.

Complaint Themes

The types of complaints received related to:

- **Customer Care:** staff conduct – of which the majority were Covid related, reflecting issues to do with the disruption of learning and availability and continuity of teaching staff; diversity and equality and student conduct.
- **Applications, Admissions, Progression:** progression, withdrawal and application process.
- **Course Related:** learning and teaching/extra support, course management and blended learning.
- **Services:** funding and providing additional learning support.

Further Improvements

We 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.

Currently the new system is undergoing comprehensive testing before implementation.

The implementation of the online system and revised process is planned for the new academic year but is dependent on a resilient working system being developed – we remain in a testing phase. Once the system is established, training and guidance will be provided to all staff in support of the new online complaint handling approach.