



Complaints Handling Procedure

Annual Report 2013/14 (01 Aug 2013 to 31 Jul 2014)

Published : 15th January 2015

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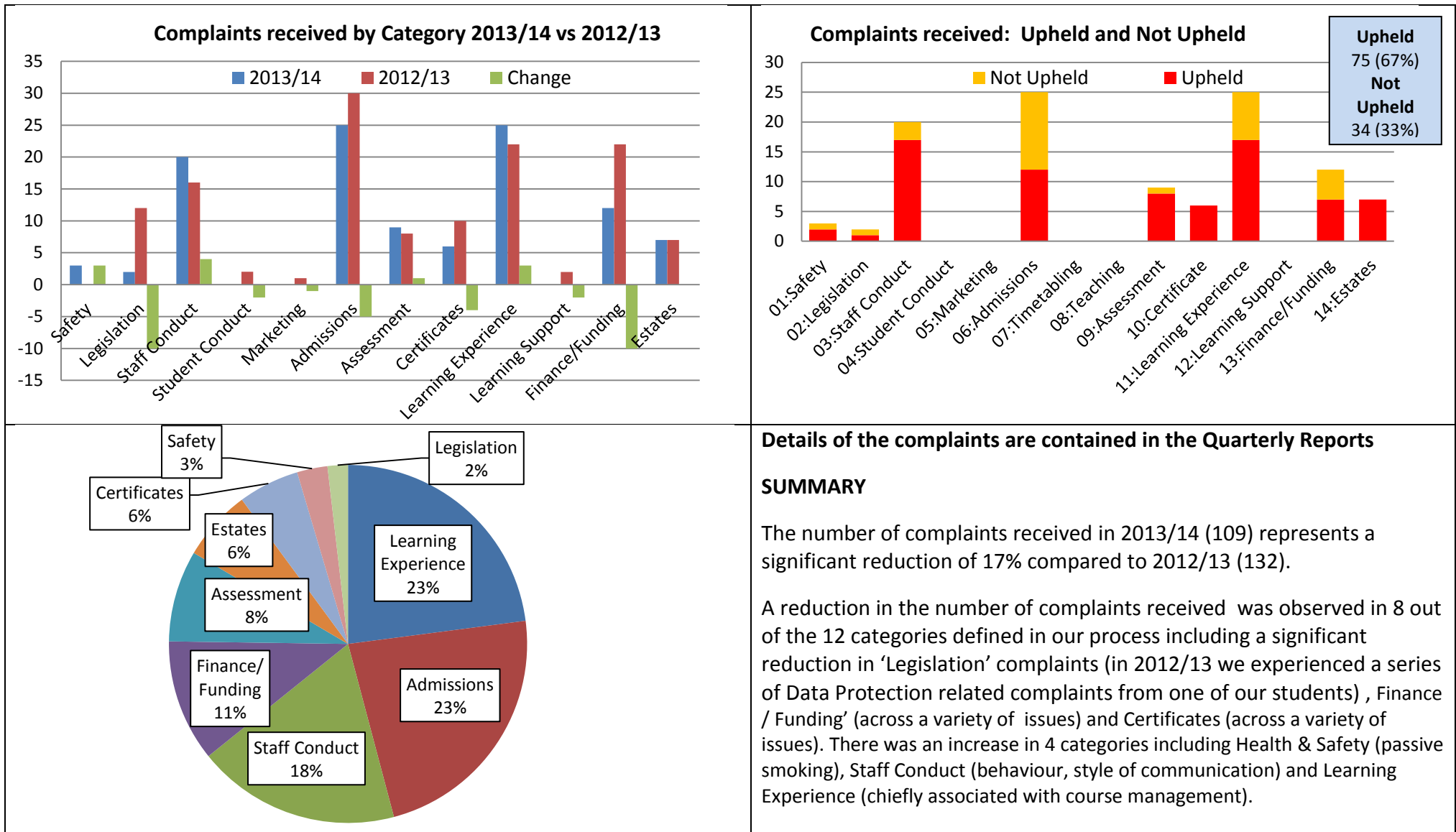
1. Performance Indicators

Total Complaints: Stage 1+ Stage 2		2013/14		2012/13*	
	Total Number of Complaints Received	109		132	
	Total number and percentage of complaints closed within relevant timeline	71	65%	100	76%
	Total number and percentage of complaints where an extension was authorised	38	35%	32	24%
	Total number and percentage of complaints upheld	75	69%	76	56%
	Average time in working days to resolve complaints	10 w. days		14 w. days	
Stage 1: Frontline		2013/14		2012/13*	
	Number and percentage of complaints	72	66%	20	15%
	Number and percentage of complaints closed within 5 working days	48	67%	18	90%
	Number and percentage where an extension was authorised	24	33%	2	10%
	Number and percentage of complaints upheld	52	72%	6	30%
	Average time in working days to resolve complaints	5 w. days		3 w. days	
Stage 2: Investigation		2013/14		2012/13*	
	Number and percentage of complaints	37	34%	112	85%
	Number and percentage of complaints closed within 20 working days	23	62%	82	73%
	Number and percentage where an extension was authorised	14	38%	30	27%
	Number and percentage of complaints upheld	23	62%	70	63%
	Average time in working days to resolve complaints	20 w. days		16 w. days	

COMPLAINT HANDLING PROCEDURE

Prior to the implementation of the Complaint Handling Procedure (CHP) the City of Glasgow College had a 'single' stage process with a target of acknowledging all complaints within 3 working days and resolving them within 15 working days. To give a base-line, for the purposes of comparing our 2013/14 response rate performance vs. 2012/13 we designated 2012/13 complaints which had been closed out within 5 days as Stage 1 and those within 10 working days as Stage 1 extension. Similarly, we designated the remaining complaints closed out within 20 working days as Stage 2 and those greater than 20 working days as Stage 2 extension. Implementing the new CHP model has succeeded in changing our behaviour resulting in a much higher proportion (66% vs. 15%) of complaints being resolved at Stage 1, albeit that on average 1 in 3 have required an extension. Encouragingly, Semester 2 (Q3+Q4) showed significant improvement over Semester 1 (Q1+Q2) – where approx. 50% of complaints at both stages required an extension, as we became better versed in assigning complaints to the appropriate stage based on the complexity of the complaint. Drawing comparisons with 2012/13 our average response time has fallen from 14 working days to 10 working days. Of course we should not underestimate that the significant reduction in the number of complaints received (17%) in 2013/14 has contributed to improving response times.

2. Complaint Categories



3. Lessons Learned and Actions taken to Improve to Service

1. Learning Experience

A common theme within the complaints received in this category was associated with course management. In several cases it could have been expected that the concerns raised by students should have surfaced in one of a number of the College's course review processes. With a major restructuring of the College in place for the start of Session 2014/15, including the transformation of our current School structure to the creation of new Faculties, it was opportune to redefine and develop our Student/Staff Engagement Forum. A 'Finger on the Pulse' approach was adopted to highlight the most positive examples in each of four key aspects of 'Learning and Teaching' to allow sharing of what is considered best practice (both within and amongst Faculties) and to highlight the least positive examples that will become focus areas for improvement, through a defined action planning process.

2. Admissions Process

A number of complaints were received regarding the 'interview process' within our Admission procedure which on investigation revealed some issues associated with the roles and responsibilities of our Students Services department and those of the Schools within the procedure that required to be clarified and better understood. These issues were addressed as part of the re-structuring (see Learning Experience above) .

Several complaints were raised regarding our National Progression Awards (NPA) courses and in particular that 'new' applicants to the College for a place of a given NPA course were given priority over current students at the College wishing to progress to that course from another NPA course. Although the complaints were not upheld (since the College was following well-established procedures) the College has restructured its approach to NPA progression and aligned it accordingly to the SCQF Framework.

3. Staff Conduct

The communication style, verbal and written, of a number of staff resulted in several complaints. Generally these were resolved to the students' satisfaction through personal apologies and assurances that greater care would be taken in the future. In some cases Customer Care training was identified as a more appropriate course of action. Still on communication, but on a slightly different tact, a clear 'Lesson to be Learned' emerged in that any significant delays in responding to requests from students will ultimately be escalated to a formal complaint!

4. Neighbour Complaints

The College is currently transforming its estate into two major campuses. We have been delighted that our actions to minimise the impact on the 'Learning Experience' along with the resilience of our students have prevented complaints on, e.g. disruption to timetables, noise, temporary classroom accommodation etc. However, the change has resulted in the permanent loss of considerable car-parking space which has resulted in a few students/staff using nearby private residential parking and leading to a number of 'neighbour complaints'. College representatives have met with a number of residents to apologise and the Student Association has been active in raising awareness of this issue and reinforcing the need to respect our neighbours.

5. Escalation to SPSO

Student complained that course fees information in College Prospectus was misleading. College apologised for clerical error and student initially accepted offer of compensation. The student reconsidered and after a request for further compensation was declined, raised the matter with SPSO.

4. Complaints Handling Process and The Way Ahead

The implementation of the new Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP) has had a positive impact on our complaint response times (See Section 1. Performance Indicators). Our collation and analysis of complaint statistics and the subsequent commitment through our management review process to learning from complaints and continuous improvement was recognised in our Customer Service Excellence Assessment Report (May 2014) as an area of Compliance Plus – *‘behaviour or practice which exceeds the requirement of the standard and are viewed as exceptional or an exemplar to others’*.

The College underwent a major restructuring prior to the start of the new academic session 2014/15 which included the transformation of the existing Quality Team to a Performance Team reporting directly to the Depute Principal. This team will continue to be the main point of contact for those complaints raised through our established communication routes, i.e. web-site, complaints@ e-mail address and ‘City Listens’ Complaint Form, and for quickly assigning appropriate staff to handle ‘Stage 1 Frontline’ complaints and for agreeing the appropriate member of staff to conduct ‘Stage 2 Investigations’ .

The Performance team will also continue to monitor complaint response times and prepare the complaint analysis for the relevant management review processes, which have changed significantly to reflect the change in structure. The Depute Principal, Heads of Performance and Faculty Directors meet monthly for the purpose of management review including a review of complaints. New monthly complaint reports have been designed to allow review of complaints by Faculty and College-wide by category.

A monthly snapshot of complaints received, closed, response times and comparison with the previous year is published on the College Web-site and forms part of our commitment to Customer Service Excellence. More detailed Quarterly Reports (including Performance Indicators) are also published on the College web-site and form the basis of the bi-annual external review of our Quality Management System (ISO9001:2008) by British Standards Institute.

We have reviewed these changes during the first half of this academic session and will now proceed to update the Complaint Handling Procedure to reflect the changes in our structure and our management review processes.

5. Performance Indicators: 2013/14 Quarterly and Year-to-date

COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCEDURE STATISTICS ACADEMIC SESSION 2013/14	Q1 2013/14		Q2 2013/14		Q3 2013/14		Q4 2013/14		YTD 2013/14		2012/13*	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
TOTAL												
Complaints Closed	31		23		26		29		109		132	
Complaints Open	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	
Complaints Closed out within relevant stage target	16	52%	11	48%	19	73%	25	86%	71	65%	100	76%
Complaints Closed out with an extension to relevant stage target	15	48%	12	52%	7	27%	4	14%	38	35%	32	24%
Complaints Upheld	23	74%	16	70%	14	54%	21	72%	75	69%	76	56%
Average time in working days to close complaints	12.7		15.2		6.8		5.9		10.0		14.0	
STAGE 1: FRONTLINE (Target: Close within 5 working days)												
Complaints considered at Frontline	18	58%	11	48%	21	81%	22	76%	72	66%	20	15%
Complaints Closed at Frontline stage within target	10	56%	5	45%	14	67%	19	86%	48	67%	18	90%
Complaints Closed at Frontline stage with authorised extension	8	44%	6	55%	7	33%	3	14%	24	33%	2	10%
Complaints Upheld at Frontline stage	15	83%	7	64%	13	62%	17	77%	52	72%	6	30%
Average time in working days to close complaints at Frontline Stage	6.0		5.9		4.6		3.0		4.6		3.0	
STAGE 2: INVESTIGATION (Target: Close within 20 working days)												
Complaints considered at Investigation Stage	13	42%	12	52%	5	19%	7	24%	37	34%	112	85%
Complaints Closed at Investigation stage within target	6	46%	6	50%	5	100%	6	86%	23	62%	82	73%
Complaints Closed at Investigation Stage with authorised extension	7	54%	6	50%	0	0%	1	14%	14	38%	30	27%
Complaints Upheld at Investigation Stage	8	62%	9	75%	1	20%	4	57%	23	62%	70	63%
Average time in working days to close complaints at Investigation Stage	21.9		23.7		16.4		15.0		20.4		15.5	

6. Appendix :College Complaint Handling Procedure

The College's Complaint Handling Procedure (CHP) complies with the Further Education Complaint Procedure implemented throughout Scotland's Colleges in August 2013. All Colleges require to provide regular reports to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) on established Performance Indicators and where applicable the 'Lessons Learned' and 'Improvements to Service' following the implementation of effective corrective and preventive actions.

Performance Indicators

Complaints are handled through stages

Stage 1: Frontline

Frontline resolution aims to quickly resolve straightforward complaints that require little or no investigation.

The target is to resolve Stage 1 complaints within 5 working days from receipt of complaint.

- In exceptional circumstances an extension of up to an additional 5 working days may be authorised.

Stage 2: Investigation

Complaints handled at the investigation stage are typically complex or require a detailed examination.

The target is to resolve Stage 2 complaints within 20 working days from receipt of complaints

- In exceptional circumstances an extension to the investigation may be authorised.

Management Review

Senior management will regularly review the information gathered from complaints and consider whether we could improve our services or update our internal policies and procedures.

As a minimum we must:

- use complaints data to identify the root cause of complaints
- take action to reduce the risk of recurrence
- record the details of corrective and preventive actions in the complaints file, and
- systematically review complaints performance reports to improve service delivery.

Where we have found that our service should be improved, we must:

- authorise the action needed to improve services
- designate an officer (or team) as the issue's 'owner', with the responsibility for ensuring the action is taken and by when
- ensure the designated officer follows up to ensure the action is taken by the agreed date
- where appropriate, monitor performance in the service area to ensure the issue has been resolved
- ensure that our staff learn from complaints