

## University of the Highlands and Islands

### Complaints Handling Procedure - Annual Summary Report: Academic Year 2016–2017

#### Introduction

The University of the Highlands and Islands operates as a collegiate federal partnership comprising of thirteen further and higher education colleges, specialist colleges and research institutions. The University is committed to valuing complaints and our aim is to resolve issues of dissatisfaction as close to the initial point of contact as possible and to conduct thorough and fair investigations of complaints so that, where appropriate, we can make evidence-based decisions on the facts of each individual case.

The University has adopted a two stage Model Complaints Handling Policy embracing the principles issued from the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman. These principles are that the complaints policy and process should be accessible, fair, flexible, confidential, clear, and timely. Consistent with this policy the University has committed to publish quarterly reports of complaints outcomes, trends and actions taken to improve our services as well as this annual summary. Reports are published on our website:

<http://www.uhi.ac.uk/en/students/support/complaints/complaints-handling-reports>

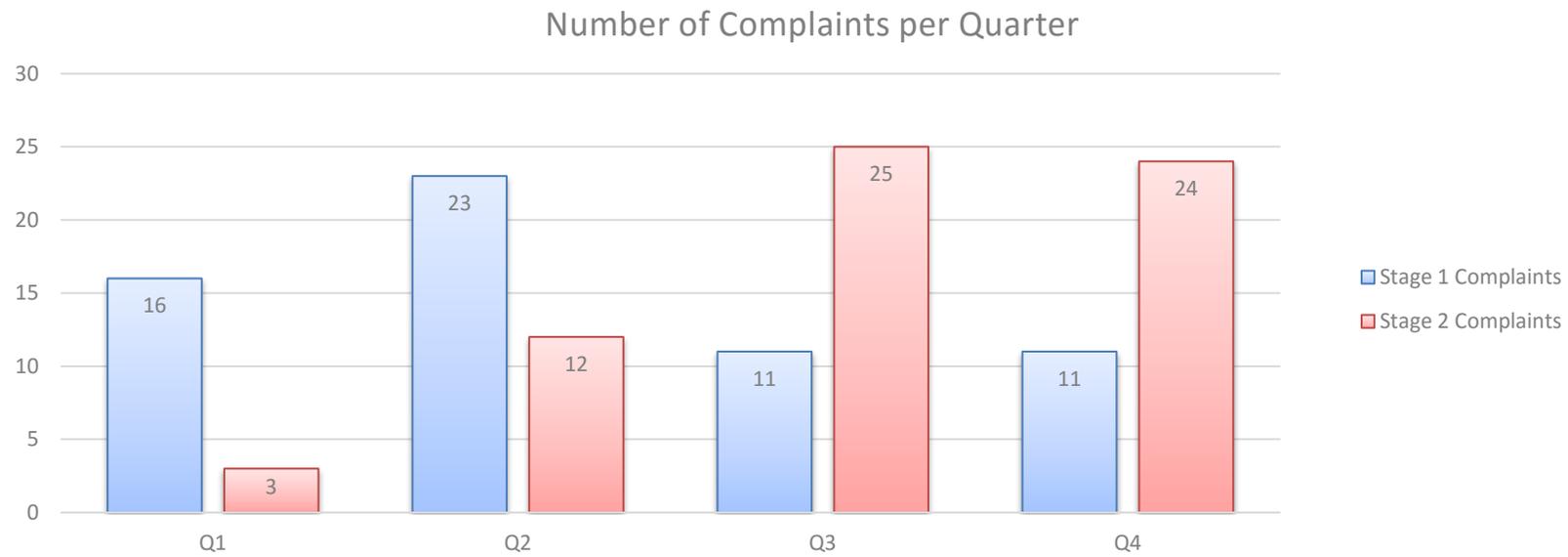
#### Overview

The following table presents collated figures on HE related complaints received directly by the University and by our Academic Partners during the academic year 2016/2017 (i.e. from 1<sup>st</sup> August 2016 – 31<sup>st</sup> July 2017).

Reporting Category	Higher Education				
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Number of complaints considered at the frontline resolution stage	16	23	11	11	61
Number of complaints closed at the frontline resolution stage within 5 working days	12	13	9	4	38
Number of complaints where an extension to the 5 working day timeline was authorised	0	6	2	5	13
Number of complaints upheld at the frontline resolution stage	3	18	6	2	29
Average time in working days to resolve complaints at the frontline resolution stage	6.6	5.3	3.7	6.8	5.6
Number of complaints considered at the investigation stage	3	12	25	24	64
Number of complaints resolved at the investigation stage within 20 working days	14	23	10	9	56
Number of complaints where an extension to the 20 working day timeline has been authorised	0	3	6	12	21
Number of complaints fully upheld at the investigation stage	1	1	9	10	21
Number of complaints partly upheld at the investigation stage	1	9	12	7	29
Average time in working days to resolve complaints at the investigation stage	15	8	15	20	14

The following graph provides a summary of the number of HE related complaints received by the University and its partners in each quarter of the 2016/17 academic year:

- Q1 = 1<sup>st</sup> August – 31<sup>st</sup> October
- Q2 = 1<sup>st</sup> November – 31<sup>st</sup> January
- Q3 = 1<sup>st</sup> February – 30<sup>th</sup> April
- Q4 = 1<sup>st</sup> May – 31<sup>st</sup> July



The University's Complaints Handling Policy provides guidance on what is and what is not a complaint.

The following are not complaints:

- a routine, first-time request for a service
- a request under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act or Data Protection Act
- a request for information or an explanation of policy or practice
- a response to an invitation to provide feedback through a formal mechanism such as a questionnaire
- an insurance claim
- an issue which is being, or has been, considered by a court or tribunal
- an attempt to have a complaint reconsidered where the University's procedure has been completed and a decision has been issued
- a grievance by a member of staff which is eligible for handling through the grievance procedure
- an appeal about an academic judgement on assessment or admission.

Alternative processes are in place to consider such issues.

It should also be noted that the University also operates an informal feedback and problem resolution service known as "the Red Button" and **241** enquiries were received by this service during the year. The Red Button provides a mechanism for individuals to submit questions, suggestions, issues of concern and positive feedback to the University and this enables the University to resolve many issues early without them escalating into a complaint. Further information about the Red Button service and the annual Red Button Report are available to view at <https://www.uhi.ac.uk/en/students/support/red-button>