

## University of the Highlands and Islands

### Complaints Handling Procedure Report for the period: 1<sup>st</sup> September to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2013

#### 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.

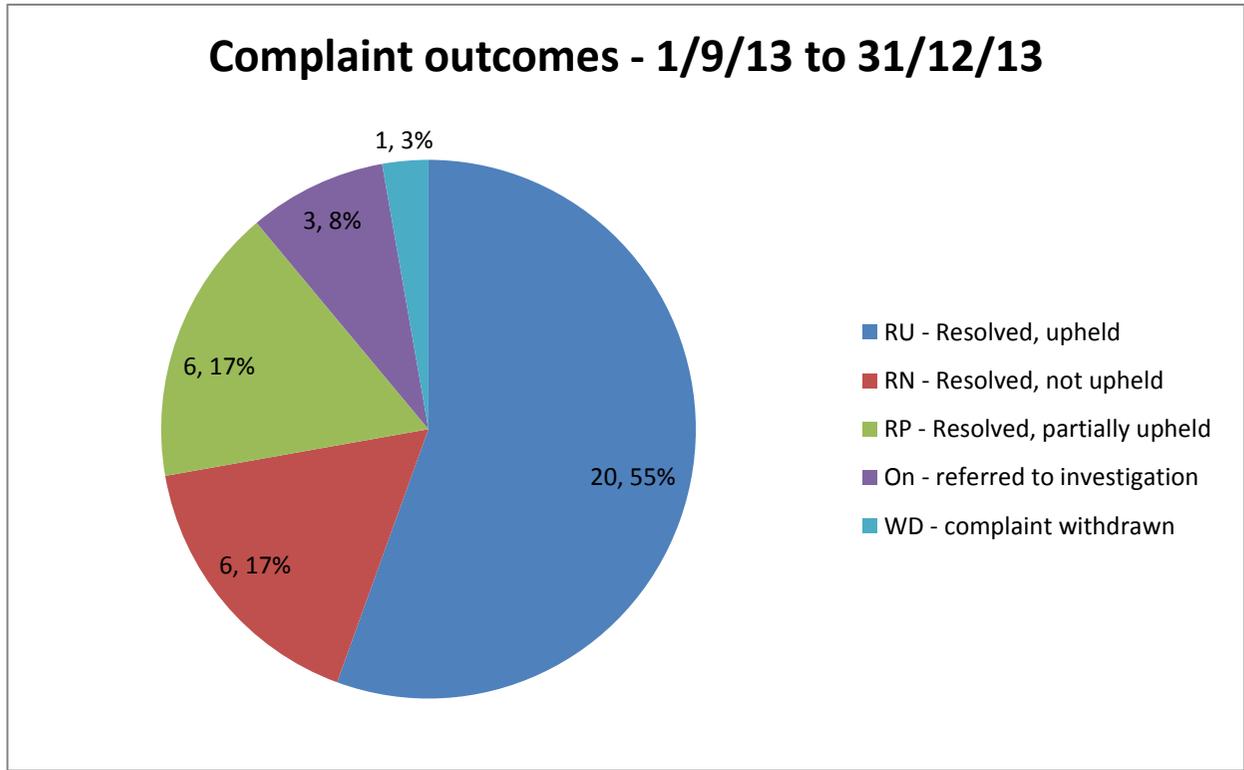
The University has adopted a two stage Model Complaints Handling Policy embracing the principles issued from the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman. These principles are that the complaints policy and process should be accessible, fair, flexible, confidential, clear, and timely. Consistent with this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

#### Overview of Complaints

The following table presents collated figures on HE related complaints received directly by the University and by our Academic Partners for the period 1st September – 31st December 2013.

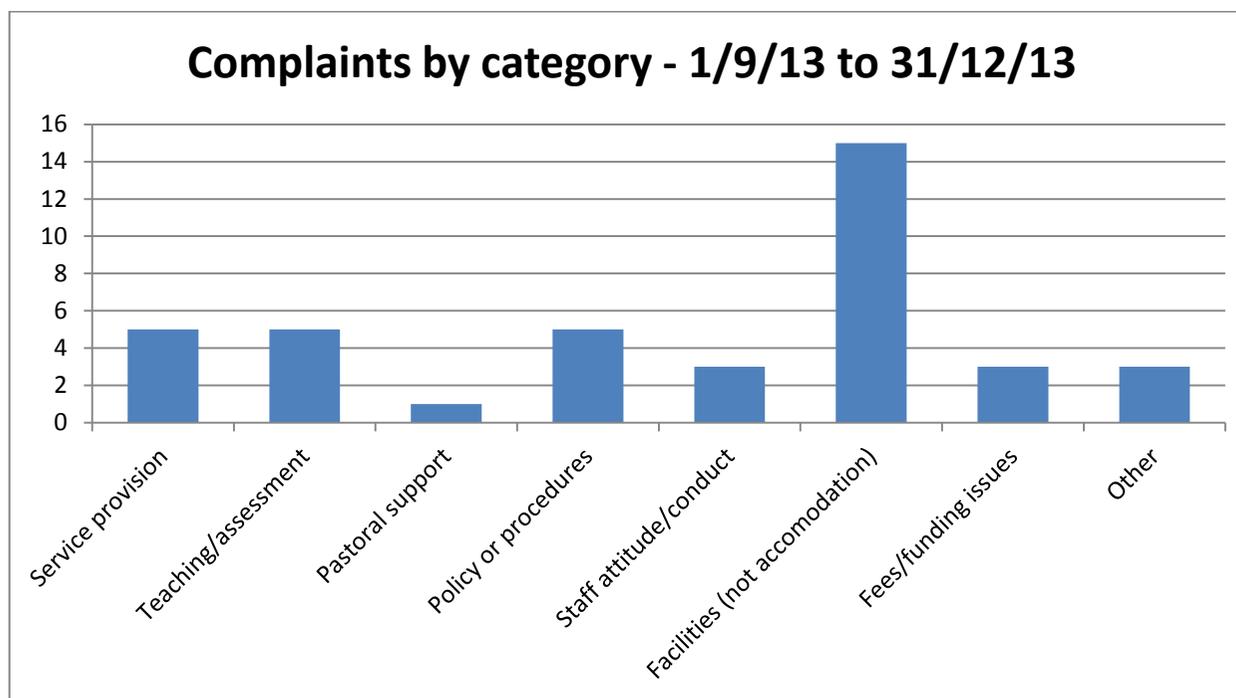
<b>Total number of complaints received</b>	36
Number of complaints considered at the frontline resolution stage	34
Number of complaints closed at the frontline resolution stage	31
Number of complaints referred to stage 2 (* 2 complaints went immediately to stage 2)	3 + 2*
Number of complaints upheld	20
Number of complaints not upheld	6
Number of complaints partially upheld	6
Number of complaints withdrawn	1

The following chart provides a summary of complaint outcomes for the period: 1<sup>st</sup> September 2013 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2013.



The following graph provides a summary of complaints by category type for the period: 1st September 2013 to 31st December 2013.

Please note that some complaints received in the period highlighted concerns related to more than one category.



## **Key issues, Common Themes and Lessons Learned**

- The majority of frontline complaints received by the University during the period were related to issues with University facilities (15 instances). Upheld issues included problems with new video conferencing facilities at one location and problems with access to University premises outside normal working hours at another. Lessons learned include the need to implement more robust testing of new video conferencing equipment before releasing for use by students and a need to review and perhaps extend premises opening hours to accommodate access out with normal working hours at specific sites.
- One complaint within the period from a student studying on a networked programme highlighted a need to develop more clear processes to identify and agree where responsibility for handling investigations into such complaints should rest. Should this be the home academic partner or the hosting partner? Measures have subsequently been implemented to ensure that such complaints are always investigated by the best placed individual and further measures are being progressed to ensure a consistent approach to complaints investigations throughout the University partnership including a new training initiative.