University of the Highlands and Islands

Complaints Handling Procedure - Annual Summary Report: Academic Year 2015–2016

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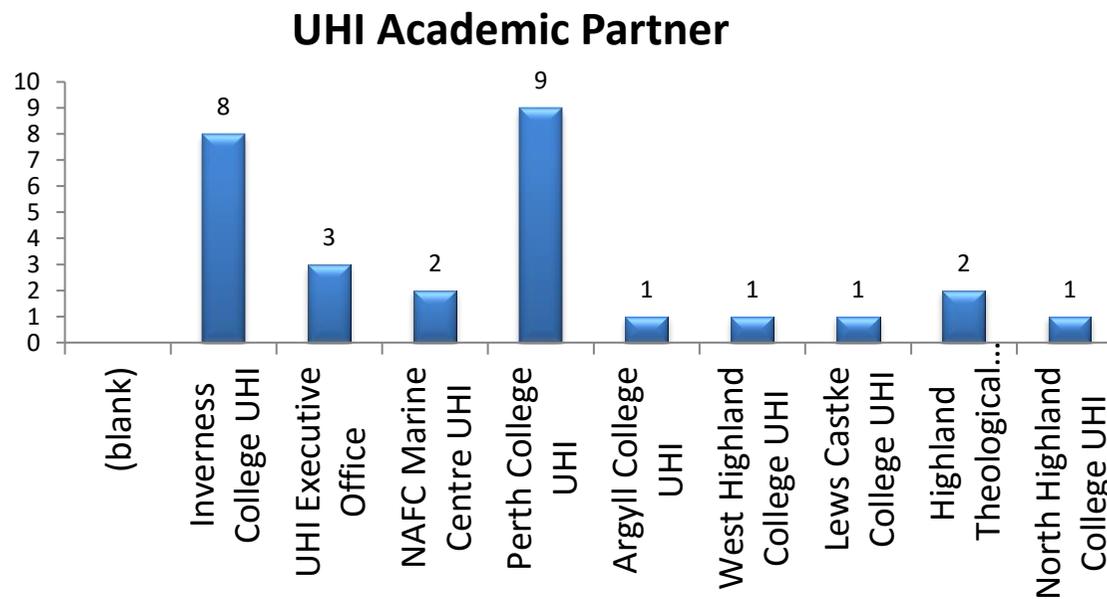http://www.uhi.ac.uk/en/students/support/complaints/complaints-handling-reports

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 2015/2016 (i.e. from 1st August 2015 – 31st July 2016).

Total number of complaints reported to UHI in the year	28
Number of complaints considered at the frontline resolution stage	28
Number of complaints closed at the frontline resolution stage	16
Number of complaints referred to stage 2	12
Number of complaints upheld	3
Number of complaints partially upheld	9
Number of complaints not upheld	16
Number of complaints withdrawn	-

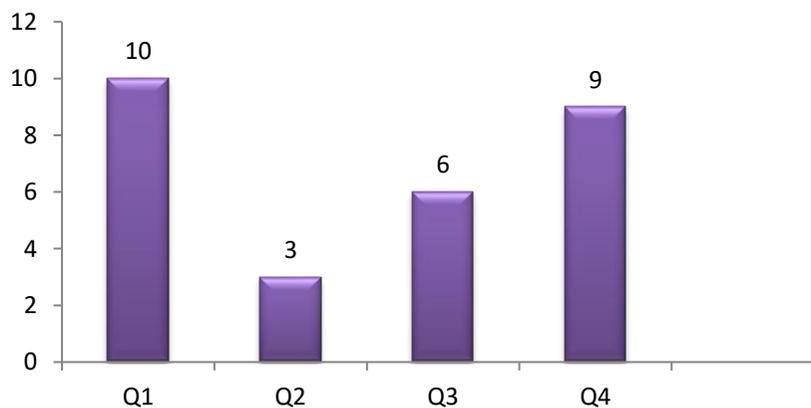AY 2015/16 – Annual Summary of HE data.

The following chart provides a summary of the number of HE complaints reported by each academic partner for the period 1st August 2015 – 31st July 2016.

UHI Academic Partner

A bar chart titled "UHI Academic Partner" showing the number of HE complaints by academic partner. The y-axis ranges from 0 to 10. Values shown:
- (blank): 0
- Inverness College UHI: 8
- UHI Executive Office: 3
- NAFC Marine Centre UHI: 2
- Perth College UHI: 9
- Argyll College UHI: 1
- West Highland College UHI: 1
- Lews Castke College UHI: 1
- Highland Theological...: 2
- North Highland College UHI: 1

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 2015/16 academic year:
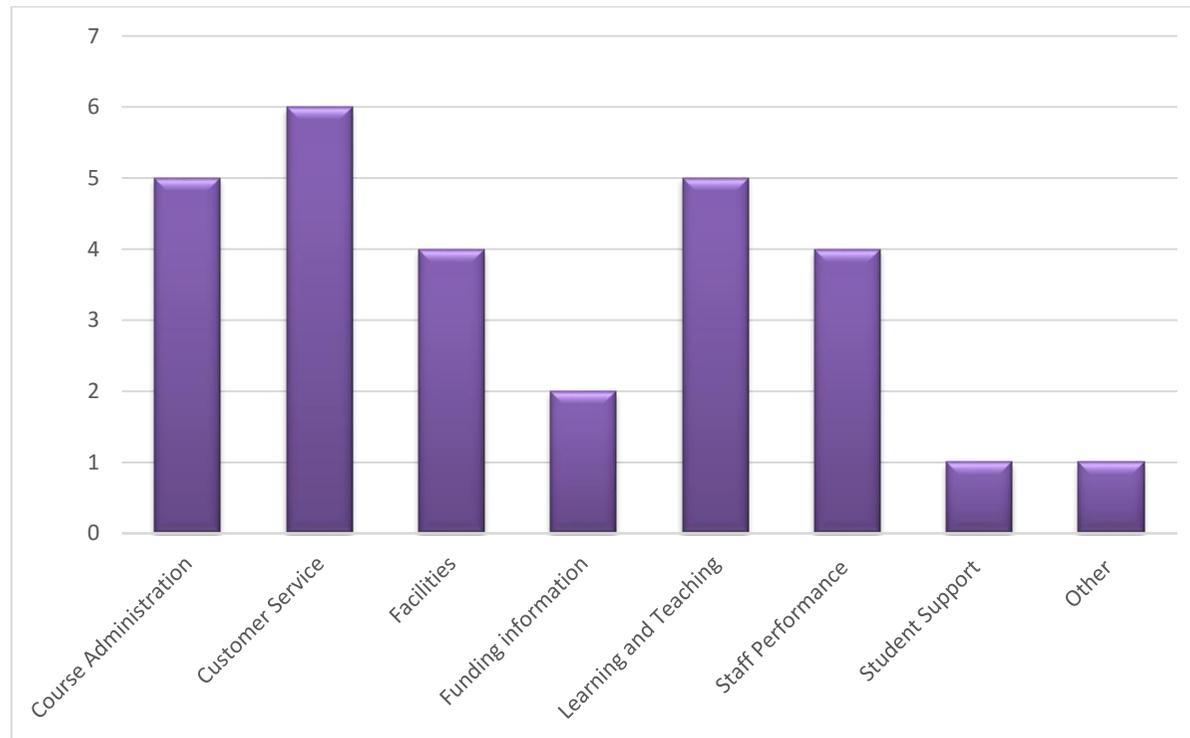
- Q1 = 1st August 215 – 31st October 2016
- Q2 = 1st November – 31st January 2016
- Q3 = 1st February – 30th April 2016
- Q4 = 1st May – 31st July 2016

Recorded Complaints per Quarter 2015/16

Key Issues and Themes

The following chart provides a summary of the categories of HE related complaints received by the University and its partners in the 2015/16 academic year:

AY 2015/16 – Annual Summary of HE data.

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 225 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