



**Working Together**

# **Complaints Handling Report 2016/17**

**July 2017**



## **Executive Summary**

The annual report analyses our performance in handling complaints effectively, resolving complaints quickly and identifying areas for improvement when our service is found to be below expectations.

Our complaint handling procedure meets the requirements of the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) model complaints handling procedure and complies with the requirements of the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010.

This report covers the period July 2016 to June 2017. In that period there were twenty frontline complaints (Level 1) and five complaints requiring a full investigation (Level 2), three of which were related (one subsequently withdrawn). In all cases the complainants were satisfied with the outcome. No complainant took unresolved complaints to the SPSO.

## **2016/17 Complaints**

The complaints handling procedure allows for two levels of complaints handling. Frontline resolution (Level 1) empowers all staff to deal with complaints at the point of contact quickly and effectively. The vast majority of complaints are resolved at this level. Where complaints are more serious or cannot be resolved at the frontline, these are investigated fully (Level 2) with a designated college manager leading the investigation. In all cases we look to learn from the complaint and examine ways it can improve the quality of our service as a consequence.

### **Frontline (Level 1) complaints**

We aim to resolve complaints quickly and close to where we provided the service. This could mean an 'on the spot' apology and explanation if something has clearly gone wrong and immediate action taken to resolve the problem.

During the period 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017 we received twenty frontline complaints, with thirteen of these resolved within our target timescale of 5 working days. A further seven complaints were not

resolved within 5 working days and the majority had been granted an extension.

Sixteen of the complaints were upheld and four were not upheld. We continue to make changes to the way in which we do things as a result of some of these complaints where changes have been specific to a programme or service and in most cases involve the attention to detail in implementing existing policy and procedures. These also include organisation and delivery of specific programmes; adherence to Health & Safety; effective use of learning and teaching strategies; improving information about specific courses; referral for learning support, and improvements to communication with students.

The number of Level 1 complaints dealt with in the year was higher than the previous year's total, rising from 14 complaints in 2015/16 to 20 in 2016/17. The vast majority of complaints were from students, with complaints from parents being the next largest category. Where a complaint against a student or staff member was upheld an apology was issued and the cause of the complaint and subsequent behaviour discussed to assist the individual in managing issues better in the future.

We recognise that we can improve our administration of complaints handling further and aim to eliminate situations where the time to deal with a complaint exceeds the allotted time without an extension of time being considered. During the period of this report there were seven complaints that exceeded the allotted timescale.

### **Investigation (Level 2) complaints**

Investigation (Level 2) complaints are those which we have not been able to resolve at the frontline, or complaints which are complex and require more detailed investigation. We aim to acknowledge receipt of Level 2 complaints within 3 working days and give a full response to the complainant within 20 working days. We received five complaints that were dealt with at Level 2 last year, all of which were upheld. Four of these were dealt with as level 2 complaints immediately because of their complexity and concern to the College and one was withdrawn by the complainant. We had one complaint escalated from Level 1 to Level 2 because the complainant was dissatisfied with the outcome at that stage.

All complainants were satisfied with the actions taken and the way in which their complaints were managed.

## **Review by the SPSO**

If a complainant has exhausted the College's complaints handling process but remains dissatisfied with our decision or the way in which we dealt with a complaint, they can ask the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) to review the way in which the complaint was handled. No complaints were referred to the SPSO during 2016/17.

## **Apology & Redress**

We always discuss with a complainant the solution they would like to see to the complaint. Where a complaint is upheld we will implement the solution agreed with the complainant. In most cases that has been an apology and an explanation as to what went wrong. In all cases the complainant was satisfied that their complaint had been dealt with appropriately. No ex gratia payments were made in 2016/17.