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CURRICULUM AND QUALITY COMMITTEE REPORT

Subject: Annual Complaints Handling Report 1 July 2017 – 30 June 2018	**Purpose:** **For Approval** ☐ **For Discussion** ☐ **For Information** ☒
Prepared by: Janet Robertson	**Date:** 9 October 2018

Purpose: To provide the Committee with an overview of the complaints received in the last year, the actions taken to resolve these and the lessons learned.

Linked to Strategic Goal 3: Provide a high quality College experience.

Executive Summary:

The attached report provides an analysis of the complaints received in academic session 2017-18. These have been dealt with following our Complaints Handling procedure and in compliance with the requirements of the Public Service Reform (Scotland) Act 2010.

There were twenty-three frontline complaints received in the period, thirteen of which were upheld. This was an increase of three over the same period in the previous year. There were six Level 2 complaints received; a slight increase from the five received the previous year. Two of the Level 2 complaints were from a student group and related to the same programme. A further two complaints were also related but to a different issue. Four of the Level 2 complaints were upheld.

Where complaints have been upheld we have used the outcome to make changes to our service and through this process we use complaints as a driver for improvement.

Recommendation:

Previous Committee Approvals:

For publication ☒	**For publication with redactions** ☐	**Not for publication** ☐

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Working Together

Complaints Handling Report 2017/18

July 2018

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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 2017 to June 2018. In that period there were twenty-three frontline complaints (Level 1) and six complaints requiring a full investigation (Level 2), two of which were received from a student group and related to the same programme. Two of the remaining four Level 2 complaints were also related, but to a different issue. In all cases but one involving GDPR issues the complainants were satisfied with the outcome. No complainant took unresolved complaints to the SPSO.

2017/18 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 2017 to 30 June 2018 eleven of the twenty-three

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frontline complaints received were resolved within our target timescale of five working days. A further twelve complaints were not resolved within five working days; however only one of these had been granted an extension.

Thirteen of the complaints were upheld and eight were not upheld. One complaint was partially upheld and a decision was unable to be formed on the final complaint. 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 twenty complaints in 2016/17 to twenty-three in 2017/18. Once again, 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.

We have also implemented a system whereby the Senior Leadership Team within the College provide an update on actions planned or taken to resolve the complaints and avoid recurrence.

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

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require more detailed investigation. We aim to acknowledge receipt of Level 2 complaints within three working days and give a full response to the complainant within twenty working days. We received six complaints that were dealt with at Level 2 last year, four of which were upheld; one was not upheld and the other complaint was partially upheld. All of these were dealt with as Level 2 complaints immediately because of their complexity and concern to the College.

All but one complainant were satisfied with the actions taken and all were satisfied with 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 2017/18.

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 2017/18.

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