

| <b>SENIOR LEADERSHIP GROUP: COVERSHEET</b>             |   |
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| <b>To, Date:</b>                                       | Senior Leadership Group, 8 November 2022                                      |
| <b>Paper Author<br/>(and designation):</b>             | Janet Allison, Academic Registrar   |
| <b>Title of Paper:</b>                                 | SPSO Quarterly Complaints Handling Report                                     |
| <b>Summary of Paper:</b>                               | Provide an update on complaints handling for the period Q4 (Jul-Sept) 2021/22 |
| <b>Recommendations (note/discuss/approve/endorse):</b> | Senior Leadership Group are asked to reflect on this paper                    |
| <b>Consultation:</b>                                   | None  |
| <b>Risk Management:</b>                                | It is essential for GSA to manage complaints effectively                      |
| <b>Resource Implications:</b>                          | None unless more central support is required in due course                    |
| <b>Equality Impact Assessment Implications:</b>        | None identified in this paper   |
| <b>Legal and Regulatory Considerations:</b>            | SPSO compliance   |
| <b>Freedom of Information (FOI):</b>                   | This paper may be released in full  |
| <b>Next Steps:</b>                                     | Consideration by SLG  |

## THE GLASGOW SCHOOL OF ART

### SENIOR LEADERSHIP GROUP: 8 NOVEMBER 2022

#### SPSO Q4 (JUL-SEPT) AND ANNUAL (2021/22) COMPLAINTS HANDLING UPDATE

The Glasgow School of Art is subject to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman's (SPSO) Model Complaints Handling Procedure.

The Complaints Handling Procedure divides complaints into Stage One (for routine, frontline complaints) and Stage Two (for more complex complaints). Stage One complaints should be resolved within five working days. Stage Two complaints should be resolved within twenty working days. Following the outcome of an investigation at Stage Two, complainants can ask the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman to review their complaint.

The Academic Quality Office co-ordinates Scottish Public Services Ombudsman complaints at GSA, linking closely with Schools and Professional Support areas. This includes logging incoming complaints, advising on process and liaising with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman. The Academic Quality Office will allocate complaints for investigation at Stage Two according to an approved list of investigators. Investigators will be agreed in conjunction with line managers. Issues raised through the Quality Assurance Agency Scotland's Scottish Concerns Scheme are managed and reported through the office of the GSA Deputy Director Academic.

#### COMPLAINTS RECEIVED

The number of complaints received in Quarter 4 has dropped slightly. There has been a notable decrease across the year as a whole, to a level comparable with the pre-pandemic average.

| <b>Table 1: Complaints Handling Procedure Complaints Received, Quarter 4 (Jul – Sept)</b> |                |                |
|---|----------------|----------------|
|   | <b>2020/21</b> | <b>2021/22</b> |
| Stage One   | 9              | 5              |
| Stage Two   | 1              | 0              |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>10</b>      | <b>5</b>       |

| <b>Table 2: Complaints Handling Procedure Complaints Received, Total of Q1, Q2, Q3 and Q4 (Oct – Sept)</b> |                |                |
|--|----------------|----------------|
|  | <b>2020/21</b> | <b>2021/22</b> |
| Stage One  | 33             | 21             |
| Stage Two  | 22             | 5              |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>55</b>      | <b>26</b>      |

#### RESPONSE TIMES

In comparison with last year, response times at Stage One remain mixed – and response times at Stage Two remain subject to delay.

80% of Stage One responses were delayed in Quarter 4 2021/22. The average response time at Stage One was 21.8 days (against a target of 5 working days) – although this figure does not take into account one Stage One complaint which is delayed, but is still under investigation.

Across the year as a whole, 48% of Stage One Responses were delayed – and the average response time was 8.7 days. 100% of Stage Two responses were delayed across the year in 2021/22. The average response time across the year at Stage Two was 48.4 days (against a target of 20 working days). Where responses are delayed at Stage Two, the Academic Quality Office and investigators endeavour to keep complainants up to date with revised timescales in line with requirements set out in the GSA Complaints Handling Procedure.

| Table 3: Complaint Response Times, Quarter 4 (Jul – Sept) |         |         |
|---|---------|---------|
|   | 2020/21 | 2021/22 |
| Stage One On Time   | 5       | 1       |
| Stage One Late  | 4       | 4       |
| Stage Two On Time   | 0       | 0       |
| Stage Two Late  | 1       | 0       |

| Table 4: Complaint Response Times, Total of Q1, Q2, Q3 and Q4 (Oct - Sept) |         |         |
|--|---------|---------|
|  | 2020/21 | 2021/22 |
| Stage One On Time  | 17      | 11      |
| Stage One Late   | 16      | 10      |
| Stage Two On Time  | 1       | 0       |
| Stage Two Late   | 22      | 5       |

## OUTCOMES

The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman requires that GSA record all complaints as Upheld, Partially Upheld, Not Upheld, or Resolved. Resolution is defined as an outcome in which both GSA and the complainant agree an outcome without the need to determine whether a complaint is upheld or not. Prior to 2021/22 we did not routinely record outcomes at Stage One. As such, it will not be possible to present comparative data in reports until the 2022/23 session.

As can be seen below in both Quarter 4 2021/22 and across the year to date, resolution is more likely at Stage One than at Stage Two.

| Table 5: Complaint Outcomes, Quarter 4 (Jul – Sept) |          |
|---|----------|
|   | 2021/22* |
| Stage One Upheld                                    | 1        |
| Stage One Partially Upheld                          | 0        |
| Stage One Not Upheld                                | 1        |
| Stage One Resolved                                  | 2        |
| Stage Two Upheld                                    | 0        |
| Stage Two Partially Upheld                          | 0        |
| Stage Two Not Upheld                                | 0        |
| Stage Two Resolved                                  | 0        |

| Table 6: Complaint Outcomes, Total of Q1, Q2, Q3 and Q4 (Oct - Sept) |          |
|--|----------|
|  | 2021/22* |
| Stage One Upheld   | 1        |
| Stage One Partially Upheld   | 3        |
| Stage One Not Upheld   | 6        |
| Stage One Resolved   | 10       |
| Stage Two Upheld   | 2        |
| Stage Two Partially Upheld   | 2        |
| Stage Two Not Upheld   | 1        |
| Stage Two Resolved   | 0        |

\*Please note: This table does not take into consideration one Stage One complaint which is still under investigation, as no outcome has yet been reached.

## COMPLAINTS BY AREA

The following table sets out the areas in which complaints originated from Quarter 4 2021/22, the total for the year to date and the overall full-year total for the previous year. Areas with more than 5 complaints in a Quarter or more than 10 in a year are highlighted. The complaints marked as other for Quarter 4 2021/22 related to Strategy & Marketing and graduation.

If Heads of School or Professional Support areas require any further information about the complaints in their areas, the Academic Quality Office will be happy to provide it.

| Area                                 | 2021/22  |          |           |          |           | 2020/21   |
|--------------------------------------|----------|----------|-----------|----------|-----------|-----------|
|                                      | Q1       | Q2       | Q3        | Q4       | Total     | Total     |
| School of Design                     | 0        | 0        | 2         | 0        | 2         | 4         |
| School of Fine Art                   | 0        | 2        | 1         | 1        | 4         | 18        |
| School of Simulation & Visualisation | 1        | 0        | 0         | 0        | 1         | 1         |
| Mack. School of Architecture         | 0        | 1        | 0         | 1        | 2         | 3         |
| Innovation School                    | 0        | 1        | 0         | 0        | 1         | 4         |
| Library Services                     | 0        | 0        | 0         | 0        | 0         | 1         |
| Technical Support                    | 0        | 2        | 0         | 0        | 2         | 0         |
| Academic Registry                    | 0        | 1        | 3         | 0        | 4         | 6         |
| Student Support & Development        | 0        | 0        | 0         | 0        | 0         | 0         |
| Research                             | 0        | 0        | 0         | 0        | 0         | 0         |
| Estates                              | 0        | 0        | 0         | 0        | 0         | 1         |
| Student Residences                   | 1        | 0        | 1         | 1        | 3         | 10        |
| Open Studio                          | 0        | 0        | 0         | 0        | 0         | 0         |
| IT                                   | 0        | 0        | 0         | 0        | 0         | 0         |
| Finance                              | 0        | 0        | 2         | 0        | 2         | 1         |
| GSA-wide                             | 0        | 0        | 0         | 0        | 0         | 1         |
| Other                                | 0        | 2        | 2         | 2        | 6         | 5         |
| <b>Total</b>                         | <b>2</b> | <b>9</b> | <b>11</b> | <b>5</b> | <b>27</b> | <b>55</b> |

## COMPLAINT THEMES

To aid reflection and alignment, the Academic Quality Office categorises complaints according to National Student Survey headings. Additionally, COVID 19, Industrial Action, Student Residences and Dignity & Respect categories have been added. Please note that where a complaint references more than one area this was recorded. Therefore, the overall theme count is higher than the number of complaints received. The current categories are:

- Teaching: e.g. courses are interesting, stimulating and challenging.
- Learning Opportunities e.g. opportunities to explore ideas/concepts in depth; to apply learning; and to draw on information/ideas from a wide range of topics.
- Assessment and Feedback e.g. transparency of marking criteria; fairness, timeliness and helpfulness of assessment/feedback.
- Academic Support e.g. contact/communication with academic and support staff; advice/guidance relating to courses, study choices etc.

- Organisation and Management e.g. organisation/smooth-running of courses, and communication of changes to courses/teaching/studio access.
- Learning Resources: e.g. access to and quality of studios/learning spaces; technical resources; library/archives; IT support etc.
- Learning Community: e.g. opportunities for student collaboration; sense of staff/student body community.
- Student Voice: e.g. student welfare; solicitation and value of student feedback.
- Dignity and Respect: e.g. misconduct; racism, and other related.
- COVID 19; Industrial Action; and Student Residences

The following table sets out the themes from Quarter 4 of 2021/22, the total for the year to date and the overall full-year total for the previous year. Themes with more than 5 complaints in a Quarter or more than 10 in the year are highlighted. Other complaints received during the current quarter include complaints relating to graduation and to the Postgraduate Degree Show.

| Theme                     | 2021/22  |          |          |          |           | 2020/21   |
|---------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|
|                           | Q1       | Q2       | Q3       | Q4       | Total     | Total     |
| Teaching                  | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0         | 1         |
| Learning Opportunities    | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0         | 3         |
| Assessment & Feedback     | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0         | 5         |
| Academic Support          | 0        | 1        | 1        | 2        | 4         | 3         |
| Organisation & Management | 0        | 0        | 2        | 0        | 2         | 8         |
| Learning Resources        | 0        | 2        | 0        | 0        | 2         | 5         |
| Learning Community        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0         | 3         |
| Student Voice             | 0        | 0        | 0        | 2        | 2         | 7         |
| Dignity & Respect         | 1        | 5        | 3        | 2        | 11        | 3         |
| COVID-19                  | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0         | 26        |
| Industrial Action         | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0        | 0         | 4         |
| Student Residences        | 1        | 0        | 1        | 0        | 2         | 9         |
| <b>Total</b>              | <b>2</b> | <b>8</b> | <b>7</b> | <b>6</b> | <b>23</b> | <b>77</b> |

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Stage Two complaints frequently contain recommendations for service improvement. These are allocated to relevant members of staff by the Academic Quality Office, and copied to the senior office holder in that area. At the end of each quarter, the Academic Quality Office ask those members of staff who have been allocated recommendations during the previous quarter for an update regarding progress.

No recommendations were issued in Quarter 3 2021/22.

## TRAINING

Training for eight Stage Two investigators was delivered on 27 June 2022. This brings the total number of fully trained staff to more than thirty – the majority of whom sit on GSA’s standing pool of Stage Two

complaints investigators. Nine new members were nominated to serve as Stage Two investigators at the beginning of the 2022/23 academic session. This brings the total to 39. New members of the pool will be offered training by the Academic Quality Office during the 2022/23 session.

**Academic Quality Office**  
**31 October 2022**