



University for the Common Good

# **GCU Complaint Handling Procedure: Governance (Part 4)**

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## Roles and responsibilities

1. All staff will be aware of:
  - the Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP)
  - how to handle and record complaints at the frontline response stage
  - who they can refer a complaint to, in case they are not able to handle the matter
  - the need to try and resolve complaints early and as close to the point of service delivery as possible; and
  - their clear authority to attempt to resolve any complaints they may be called upon to deal with.
2. Training on this procedure will be part of the induction process for all new staff. Refresher training will be provided for current staff on a regular basis.
3. The University Executive will ensure that:
  - The University's final position on a complaint investigation is signed off by a senior member of the Department of Governance or member of University Executive in order to provide assurance that this is the definitive response of the University and that the complainant's concerns have been taken seriously
  - it maintains overall responsibility and accountability for the management and governance of complaints handling (including complaints about contracted services)
  - it has an active role in, and understanding of, the CHP (although not necessarily involved in the decision-making process of complaint handling)
  - mechanisms are in place to ensure a consistent approach to the way complaints handling information is managed, monitored, reviewed and reported at all levels in the University, and
  - complaints information is used to improve services, and this is evident from regular publications
4. **Principal and Vice Chancellor:** The Principal and Vice Chancellor provides leadership and direction in ways that guide and enable us to perform effectively across all services. This includes ensuring that there is an effective Complaints Handling Procedure, with a robust investigation process that demonstrates how we learn from the complaints we receive. The Principal and Vice Chancellor may take a personal interest in all or some complaints, or may delegate responsibility for the CHP to senior staff. Regular management reports assure the Principal and Vice Chancellor of the quality of complaints performance.
5. The Principal and Vice Chancellor is also responsible for ensuring that there are governance and accountability arrangements in place in relation to complaints about contractors.
6. **Deans of Schools, Directors of Service, Heads of Departments and other senior managers:** May be involved in the operational investigation and management of complaints handling, especially at stage 1. As senior officers they may be responsible for preparing and signing decision letters to complainants, so they should be satisfied that the investigation is complete and their response addresses all aspects of the complaint.

7. **Complaints investigator:** The complaints investigator is responsible and accountable for the undertaking stage 2 complaint investigations, and will be involved in the investigation and in coordinating all aspects of the response to the complainant. This may include preparing a comprehensive written report, including details of any procedural changes in service delivery and identifying wider opportunities for learning across the Institution. Complaint Investigators will be appointed by the Department of Governance or a member of Executive Board. Support for complaint investigators will be provided by the Department of Governance.
8. **People Services:** People Services in conjunction with the Department of Governance is responsible for ensuring all new staff receive training on the CHP as part of the induction process,
9. **Department of Governance:** is responsible for the implementation of the CHP. The Department will advise and support staff in responding to stage 1 complaints and advise complainants on the correct use of the CHP. The Department of Governance will manage all stage 2 complaint investigations and will gather and report complaints data. The Department will ensure that: refresher training is available to current staff on a regular basis; in conjunction with People Services, that all new staff receive training on the CHP as part of induction; and that Complaint Investigators receive appropriate training and support to undertake investigations.
10. **The Institution's SPSO liaison officer:** The SPSO liaison officer is a senior member of the Department of Governance. This role may include providing complaints information in an orderly, structured way within requested timescales, providing comments on factual accuracy on our behalf in response to SPSO reports, and confirming and verifying that recommendations have been implemented. Recording, reporting, learning from and publicising complaints
11. Complaints provide valuable feedback. One of the aims of the CHP is to identify opportunities to improve services across the University. By recording and analysing complaints data, we can identify and address the causes of complaints and, where appropriate, identify training opportunities and introduce service improvements.
12. We also have arrangements in place to ensure complaints about contractors are recorded, reported on and publicised in line with this CHP.

## Recording complaints

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13. It is important to record suitable data to enable us to fully investigate and respond to the complaint, as well as using our complaint information to track themes and trends. As a minimum, we should record:
  - the complainant's name and contact details
  - the date the complaint was received
  - the nature of the complaint
  - the service the complaint refers to
  - staff member responsible for handling the complaint
  - action taken and outcome at frontline response stage
  - date the complaint was closed at the frontline response stage
  - date the investigation stage was initiated (if applicable)
  - action taken and outcome at investigation stage (if applicable)

- date the complaint was closed at the investigation stage (if applicable); and
  - the underlying cause of the complaint and any remedial action taken.
  - *the outcome of the SPSO's investigation (where applicable).*
14. If the complainant does not want to provide any of this information, we will reassure them that it will be managed appropriately, and record what we can.
15. Individual complaint files will be stored and retained in line with data protection guidelines and our document retention policy.

## Learning from complaints

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16. We must have clear systems in place to act on issues identified in complaints. As a minimum, we must:
- seek to identify the root cause of complaints
  - take action to reduce the risk of recurrence; and
  - systematically review complaints performance reports to improve service delivery.
17. Learning may be identified from individual complaints (regardless of whether the complaint is upheld or not) and from analysis of complaints data.
18. Where we have identified the need for service improvement in response to an individual complaint, we will take appropriate action. The Department of Governance will liaise with the relevant Dean of School, Director of Service or Head of Department to ensure appropriate action is taken to develop, approve, implement and promulgate any service improvements.
19. SPSO has guidance on [Learning from complaints](#).
20. Senior management will review the information reported on complaints regularly to ensure that any trends or wider issues which may not be obvious from individual complaints are quickly identified and addressed. Where we identify the need for service improvement, we will take appropriate action (as set out above). Where appropriate, performance in the service area should be monitored to ensure that the issue has been resolved.

## Reporting of complaints

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21. We have a process for the internal reporting of complaints information, including analysis of complaints trends. Regularly reporting the analysis of complaints information helps to inform management of where services need to improve.
22. We will report at least **quarterly** to senior management and at least annually to the governing body on:
- performance statistics, in line with the complaints performance indicators published by SPSO
  - analysis of the trends and outcomes of complaints (this should include highlighting where there are areas where few or no complaints are received, which may indicate either good practice or that there are barriers to complaining in that area).

## Publicising complaints information

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23. We publish on a **quarterly** basis information on complaints outcomes and actions taken to improve services.
24. This demonstrates the improvements resulting from complaints and shows that complaints can help to improve our services. It also helps ensure transparency in our complaints handling service and will help to show that we value complaints.
25. We will publish an **annual** complaints performance report on our website in line with SPSO requirements, and provide this to the SPSO on request. This summarises and builds on the quarterly reports we have produced about our services. It includes:
  - performance statistics, in line with the complaints performance indicators published by the SPSO; and
  - complaint trends and the actions that have been or will be taken to improve services as a result.
26. These reports must be easily accessible to members of the public and available in alternative formats as requested.