

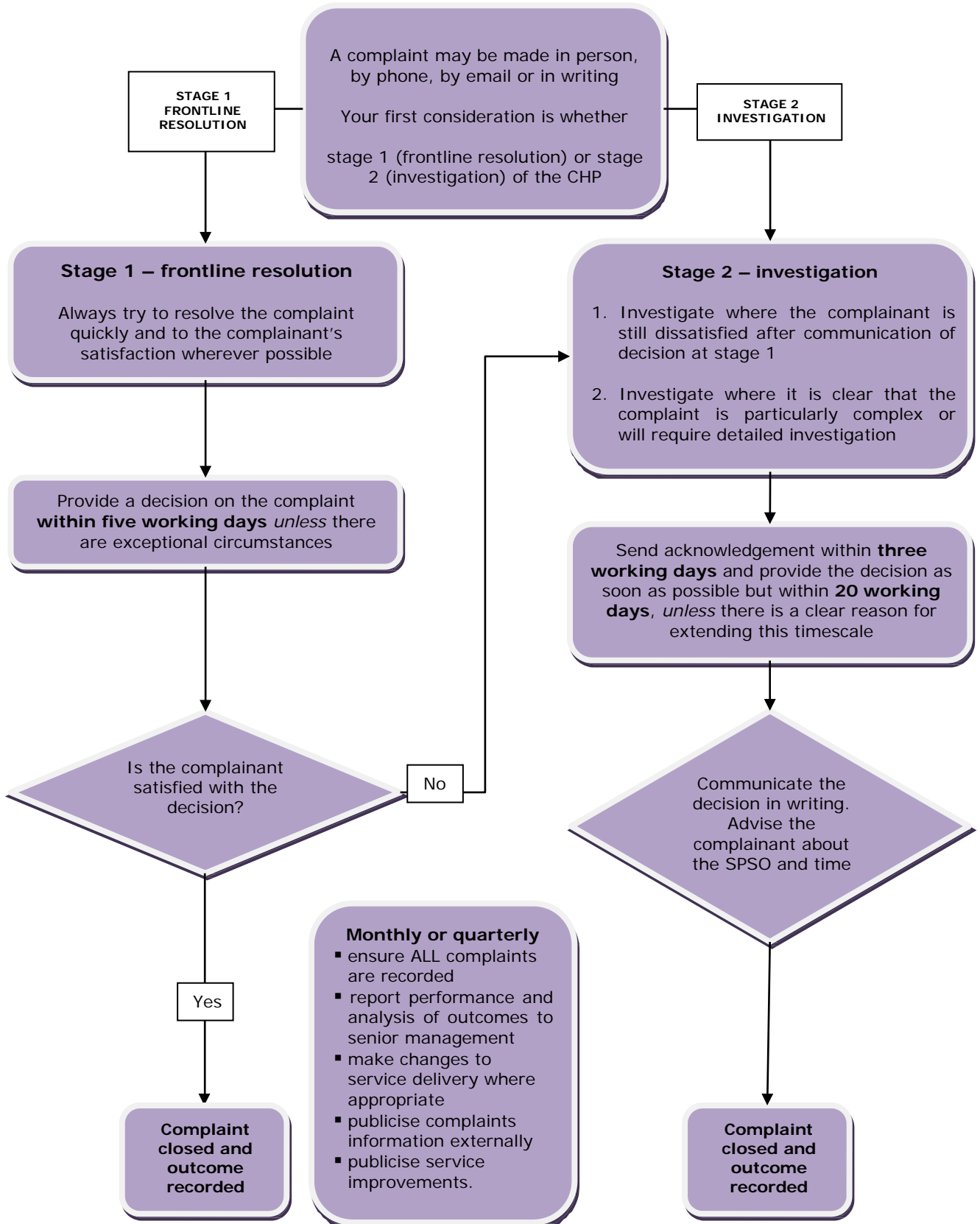
**COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCEDURE**

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**DIAGRAM**

**The Complaints Handling Procedure**



## PART A: WHAT IS A COMPLAINT?

### 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This *Complaints Handling Procedure* shall apply to all enrolled students of the University and members of the public. The *Complaints Handling Procedure* does not apply to University staff. This *Complaints Handling Procedure* reflects the Robert Gordon University's commitment to valuing complaints. The University aims 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.
- 1.2 Resolving complaints early saves time and resource and contributes to the overall efficiency of the University. Concentrating on achieving an early resolution of a complaint as close to the point of contact as possible will free up the time of academic and support staff and ultimately contribute to the continued positive experience of our students and members of the public, including applicants.

### 2. NATURE OF COMPLAINT

- 2.1 For the purposes of this procedure, a complaint shall be defined as:

An expression of dissatisfaction by one or more individuals about the standard of a service, action or lack of action by or on behalf of the University, as experienced in the physical and/or virtual environment

- 2.2 A complaint may relate to [though is not limited to] the following]:
- (a) the quality and standard of service;
  - (b) failure to provide a service;
  - (c) the quality of facilities or learning resources;
  - (d) treatment by or attitude of a staff member, student or contractor;
  - (e) inappropriate behaviour by a staff member, student or contractor;
  - (f) the failure of the University to follow an appropriate administrative process;
  - (g) dissatisfaction with the University's policy, although it is recognised that policy is set at the discretion of the University.
- 2.3 Not every concern raised with the University shall constitute a complaint and the following provides an indicative [though not exhaustive] list of concerns which are not classed as complaints:
- (a) a routine, first-time request for a service;

- (b) a request under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act or Data Protection Act;
- (c) a request for information or an explanation of policy or practice;
- (d) a request for compensation only.
- (e) a response to an invitation to provide feedback through a formal mechanism such as a questionnaire or committee membership will generally not be treated as a complaint;
- (f) an insurance claim;
- (g) an issue which is being, or has been, considered by a court or tribunal;
- (h) an attempt to have a complaint reconsidered where the University's procedure has been completed and a decision has been issued;
- (i) a grievance by a member of staff;
- (j) an appeal about an academic decision of an Assessment Board relating to assessment, progression and/or award (refer *Academic Regulation A3 – Section 1*, paragraph 6.2);
- (k) an academic decision relating to admission to a course of the University.

2.5 These issues will be dealt with under the alternative appropriate processes rather than under the *Complaints Handling Procedure*. It should be noted, however, that some situations can involve a combination of issues, some are complaints and others are not, and each case should be assessed on a case by case basis.

### 3. WHO CAN MAKE A COMPLAINT AND HOW TO MAKE A COMPLAINT?

Please also refer to paragraphs 6: *Stage 1: Frontline Resolution* and 7: *Stage 2: Investigation*.

#### Applicability

- 3.1 The *Complaints Handling Procedure* applies to complaints from anyone who receives, requests or is affected by the services of the University. This may include [though is not limited to]:
- (a) a student's experience during their time at the University (all referred to as 'students' through the remainder of this *Complaints Handling Procedure*;
  - (b) members of the public, where they have a complaint about matters which are (or which were at the time the issue arose) the responsibility of the University; and
  - (c) members of the public who are applying for admission to the University and whose complaint does not relate to academic judgement.

- 3.2 The basic processes for investigating complaints are the same for students, members of the public and applicants to the University.
- 3.3 A person can make a complaint in writing, in person, by telephone, by email, on a University official social media platform or by having someone complain on their behalf.
- 3.4 Sometimes individuals may be unable or reluctant to make a complaint on their own. The University will accept complaints brought by third parties, as long as the individual affected has given their personal consent under the requirements of the Data Protection Act (1998); please refer to the University's website for guidance [www.rgu.ac.uk/about/governance/information-governance/data-protection](http://www.rgu.ac.uk/about/governance/information-governance/data-protection). This usually means that the individual affected must give clear written authority for the third party to act on their behalf. Complaints made by a third party with the explicit permission of the complainant will be handled in accordance with the timescales detailed within this *Complaints Handling Procedure*.

### **Anonymous complaints**

- 3.5 Complaints submitted anonymously will only be considered where there is sufficient information in the complaint to enable the University to make further enquiries. If, however, an anonymous complaint does not provide such information then the University may decide not to pursue it further. However, the University may give consideration to the issues raised, and will record the complaint so that corrective action can be taken as appropriate.
- 3.6 Any decision not to pursue an anonymous complaint will require authorisation by a member of the *Executive*. If an anonymous complaint contains serious allegations, it shall be referred to a Senior Officer immediately.

### **Complaints involving more than one School, Professional Support Department and/or Research Institute**

- 3.7 If a complaint relates to the actions of two or more Faculties, Schools, Professional Support Departments and/or Research Institutes, the staff member receiving the complaint will confer with the other area(s) to decide who will take the lead on the complaint. The complainant will be told to whom the complaint is being passed and given their contact details. Coordination may still be required between different areas of the University to ensure that the complaint is fully addressed in a single response. The nature of the complaint may also require parallel procedures to be initiated (such as the *Academic Appeals (Award and Progression Procedure)* or *Student Misconduct Procedure*).

### **Complaints involving other organisations or contractors who provide a service on behalf of the University**

- 3.8 If an individual complains to the University about the service of another organisation, but the University has no involvement in the issue, the individual should be advised to contact the appropriate organisation directly.

- 3.9 Where a complaint relates to a University service and the service of another organisation the complaint will be handled through the *Complaints Handling Procedure* and the normal timescales will apply.
- 3.10 Such complaints would relate to services provided on the University's behalf, such as partner institutions and contractors, or to those provided by a separate organisation, such as award agencies. If enquiries to an outside organisation in relation to the complaint are required, care will be taken to comply with data protection legislation and the guidance on handling personal information. Such complaints include [though not limited to] the following:
- (a) A complaint made about a service that is contracted out, such as catering services, accommodation or car parking.
  - (b) A complaint made in relation to provision of third-party services, which may include scribes and certain software.
  - (c) A complaint made to the University about a student loan where the dissatisfaction relates to the service the University has provided and the service the Student Awards Agency for Scotland has provided.

Please also refer to paragraphs [6: Stage 1: Frontline Resolution](#) and [7: Stage 2: Investigation](#).

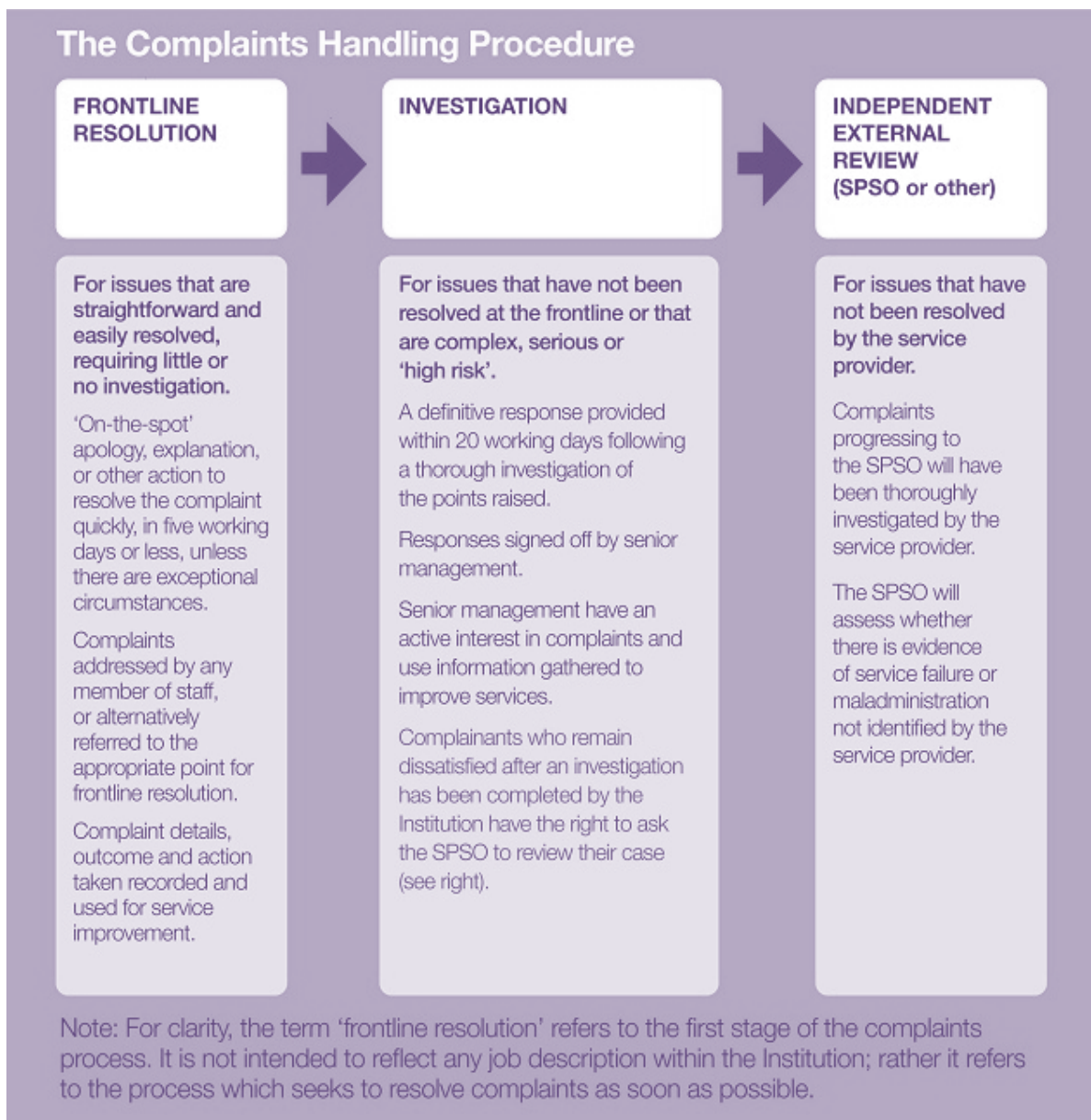
#### 4. TIME LIMIT FOR MAKING COMPLAINTS

- 4.1 Complaints should be raised with the University as soon as problems arise to enable prompt investigation and swift resolution. Complaints should be raised within six months from when the complainant first became aware of the problem, unless there are special circumstances for requesting consideration of a complaint beyond this time.
- 4.2 Consideration of any complaints submitted outwith the six month period will be at the discretion of the University. Such consideration should also take into account the time limit within which a member of the public can normally ask the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman to consider complaints, which is twelve months from when the person first became aware of the issue about which they are complaining.
- 4.3 Complaints lodged outwith the six month period must be submitted in writing using the *Complaint Form*. On receipt of a late complaint, the member of staff receiving the complaint will immediately forward it to the relevant member of the *Executive* and Complaints Investigator and they shall decide whether failure to meet the standard timescales was due to verifiable circumstances which were outwith the control of the complainant. Where the member of the *Executive* and the Complaints Investigator are satisfied that:
- (i) there are verifiable circumstances then the complaint shall be accepted and the complaint shall be considered under the *Complaints Handling Procedure* and the normal timescales shall apply.
  - (ii) there are no verifiable circumstances then the complaint shall be dismissed.

The member of the *Executive* shall notify the complainant in writing of the decision to either accept or dismiss the complaint within 10 working days of receipt of the complaint.

**PART B: THE COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCEDURE**

**5. OVERVIEW OF THE PROCEDURE**





This *Complaints Handling Procedure* is intended to provide a quick, simple and streamlined process with a strong focus on early resolution by empowered and well-trained staff. The *Complaints Handling Procedure* has two stages:

- **Stage 1 – Frontline Resolution:** Frontline resolution seeks to resolve straightforward complaints swiftly and effectively at the point at which the complaint is made, or as close to that point as possible.
- **Stage 2 – Investigation:** Investigation is appropriate where a complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of frontline resolution, or where frontline resolution is not possible or appropriate due to the complexity or seriousness of the case.

## 6. STAGE 1: FRONTLINE RESOLUTION

- 6.1 Stage 1: Frontline Resolution will normally be completed within five working days. Anyone who has a complaint is encouraged to raise it initially at the point of, or as close to the point of, becoming aware of it as possible and to raise it with the School, Professional Support Department and/or Research Institute in which the issue arose. Complaints at this stage may be made face-to-face, by phone, in writing, by email or on a University official social media platform.
- 6.2 The purpose of frontline resolution is to attempt to resolve as quickly as possible complaints which are straightforward and require little or no investigation. Complaints at this stage of the process may be addressed by any relevant member of the University staff and may be handled by way of a face-to-face discussion with the complainant, or by asking an appropriate member of staff to deal with the complaint. The date on which the member of staff receives the complaint shall be taken as the date of lodgement. On receipt of the complaint the member of staff will record the details, including date of lodgement, on the University's Complaint's System.
- 6.3 Members of staff to whom complaints are made will consider some key questions, including:
- Is this a complaint or should the individual be referred to another procedure?
  - What specifically is the complaint(s) about and to which area(s) of the University does it relate?
  - What outcome is the complainant hoping for and can it be achieved?
  - Is this complaint straightforward and likely to be resolved with little or no investigation?
  - Can the complaint be resolved on the spot by providing an apology, an explanation and/or an alternative solution?
  - Can another member of staff assist in seeking a frontline resolution?
  - What assistance can be provided to the complainant in taking this forward?
- 6.4 Resolution may be achieved by providing an on-the-spot explanation of why the issue occurred and/or an apology. In addition, where appropriate, the complainant will be provided with an indication of any corrective action to prevent any future recurrence of the issue(s).
- 6.5 If responsibility for the issue being complained about lies in the staff member's area of work then every attempt will be made to resolve the issue at source. If

responsibility lies elsewhere, the staff member receiving the complaint will liaise with the relevant area rather than simply passing the complainant onto another office.

### Extension to the five day timeline

- 6.6 Frontline resolution shall normally be completed within five working days, though a resolution may be achieved more quickly. In exceptional circumstances a short extension of time may be necessary to increase the possibility of resolving the complaint at the frontline resolution stage. For example, information may need to be obtained from other areas where no single area of the University is responsible for the issue(s) being complained about. Where an extension is required this must be signed off by an appropriate Head of School/Associate Dean/Head of Professional Support Department/Director of Research Institute. The complainant will be informed of the reasons for extending the deadline and be advised of the new timescale for resolution. The maximum extension which can be granted is five working days (i.e. not more than 10 working days in total from the date of receipt of the complaint).

### Closing the complaint at the Frontline Resolution Stage

- 6.7 The complainant will be informed of the outcome of the complaint. This may be face-to-face, by phone, in writing, by email or via a University official social media platform. There is no requirement to send out written communication to the complainant although the staff member may decide to do so. The response will address all areas of the complaint and explain the reasons for the decision.
- 6.8 Once the outcome has been issued, the record of the complaint will be updated on the University's Complaints System, including details of the decision reached. The complaint will then be closed.

## 7. STAGE 2: INVESTIGATION

- 7.1 The Stage 2: Investigation will normally be completed within 20 working days of the complaint being received for Stage 2 Investigation. Such complaints may already have been considered at the frontline resolution stage, or they may be complaints identified upon receipt as appropriate for immediate investigation. A complaint will proceed to Stage 2: Investigation when:
- frontline resolution was attempted, but the complainant remains dissatisfied. This may be after the case has been closed following the frontline resolution stage;
  - the complainant refuses to recognise or engage with the frontline resolution process and is insistent that the issue be addressed by a more senior officer;
  - the issues raised are complex and will require detailed investigation;
  - the complaint relates to issues that have been identified by the University as high risk or high profile. Such complaints may:
    - involve a death or terminal illness;
    - involve serious service failure, for example major delays in service

provision or repeated failures to provide a service;

- generate significant and on-going press interest;
- pose a serious operational risk to the University;
- present issues of a highly sensitive nature.

7.2 A person can make a complaint in writing, in person, by telephone, by email, on a University official social media platform or by having someone complain on their behalf. Where it is clear that a complaint will be immediately considered at the investigation stage, the complainant may be encouraged to complete the appropriate *Complaint Form* to provide full details of the complaint and any relevant documentation. If they choose not to write it down and would prefer to complain in person, then exceptionally a *Complaint Form* can be completed with them and a letter to confirm the scope of the complaint issued to them.

7.3 The purpose of conducting an investigation is to establish all of the facts relevant to the points made in the complaint and to provide a full, objective and proportionate response to the complainant that represents the Institution's definitive position.

### University response to Stage 2: Investigation Complaints

7.4 The University will allocate the complaint to a Complaints Investigator. The Complaints Investigator shall provide the complainant with a signed and dated acknowledgement of receipt within three working days of the University receiving the complaint. The date the complaint was received for investigation shall become the date of lodgement and shall be recorded within the University's Complaint Record System. It is important to be clear from the start of the investigation stage exactly what is being investigated, and to ensure that both the complainant and the Complaints Investigator understand the scope of the investigation. The Complaints Investigator shall have a discussion with the complainant, either face to face or by other means, and, three key questions shall be considered:

- (i) What specifically is the complaint (or complaints)?
- (ii) What does the complainant want to achieve by complaining?
- (iii) Do the complainant's expectations appear to be reasonable and achievable?

If the complainant's expectations appear to exceed what the University can reasonably provide or are not within the University's power to provide, the complainant will be advised of this as soon as possible in order to manage expectations about possible outcomes.

### Timelines

7.5 The following timescales will apply for Stage 2: Investigation:

- the complaint will be acknowledged in writing by the Complaints Investigator within 3 working days of receipt of the complaint for investigation;

- the University will provide a full response to the complaint as soon as possible but not later than 20 working days from the time that the complaint was received for investigation.

### Extension to the timeline

- 7.6 Stage 2: Investigations will normally be completed within 20 working days. However, in some cases it may not be possible to meet this deadline. For example some complaints may be so complex that they will require careful consideration and detailed investigation beyond 20 working days. Where there are clear and justifiable reasons for extending the timescale, the appropriate Head of School/Associate Dean/Head of Professional Support Department/Director of Research Institute will exercise judgement and will set time limits on any extended investigation, with the agreement of the complainant. If the complainant does not agree to an extension but it is unavoidable and reasonable, then Head of School/Associate Dean/Head of Professional Support Department/Director of Research Institute will consider and confirm the extension. In such circumstances, the complainant will be informed in writing of the reasons for the extension and advised of the new timescale for bringing the investigation to a conclusion. Such extensions will be the exception and the University will always strive to conclude Stage 2: Investigations within 20 working days. The University's Complaint Record System will be updated to record any extended deadlines and such information will be included in the annual statistical report.

### Mediation

- 7.7 Some complex complaints (where, for example, the complainant and/or other involved parties have become entrenched in their position) may benefit from a different approach to resolving the complaint. Using mediation can help both parties to understand what is driving the complaint, and may be more likely to result in a mutually satisfactory conclusion being reached. Where the University and the complainant agree to mediation, revised timescales should be agreed.

### Closing the complaint at the Investigation Stage

- 7.8 The member of the *Executive* will ensure the complainant is provided with written notification of the outcome of the investigation and will advise the complainant of:
- their right to ask the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) to review the complaint;
  - the time limit for doing so;
  - how to contact the SPSO.
- 7.9 The member of the *Executive* will be responsible for ensuring that the outcome, and details of how and when it was communicated to the complainant, is recorded on the University's Complaint Record System.

## 8. SCOTTISH PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN

8.1 All complainants of the Robert Gordon University are entitled to pursue a complaint through the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) where the complainant had exhausted the University's internal complaints procedures.

8.2 The SPSO requires the University to use the wording below to inform complainants of their right to ask the SPSO to review the complaint.

The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) is the final stage for complaints about public services in Scotland. This includes complaints about Scottish universities. If you remain dissatisfied with a university after its complaints process, you can ask the SPSO to look at your complaint. The SPSO cannot normally look at complaints:

- where you have not gone all the way through the university's complaints handling procedure
- more than 12 months after you became aware of the matter you want to complain about, or
- that have been or are being considered in court.

The SPSO's contact details are:

**SPSO**  
**4 Melville Street**  
**Edinburgh**  
**EH3 7NS**

**SPSO**  
**Freepost EH641**  
**Edinburgh**  
**EH3 0BR**

Freephone **0800 377 7330**  
Online contact [www.spsso.org.uk/contact-us](http://www.spsso.org.uk/contact-us)  
Website [www.spsso.org.uk](http://www.spsso.org.uk)  
Mobile site: <http://m.spsso.org.uk>

## PART C: GOVERNANCE OF THE COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCEDURE

### 9. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

9.1 The University has mechanisms in place to ensure that all staff are aware of:

- the *Complaints Handling Procedure*;
- how to handle and record complaints at the frontline resolution stage;
- who they can refer a complaint to if they are unable to handle the matter personally;

- the need to try and resolve complaints early and as locally (within their Professional Support Department, School and/or Research Institute) as possible;
- their clear authority to attempt to resolve any complaints they may be called upon to deal with.

9.2 The University will ensure that:

- the University's final position on a complaint investigation is signed off by an appropriate member of the *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 within the University;
- it has an active role in, and understanding of, the *Complaints Handling Procedure* (although not necessarily involved in the decision making process of complaints 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;
- complaints information is used to improve services, and this is evident from regular publications.

9.3 The role and responsibilities of individual staff members are as follows:

(a) **Principal**

The Principal provides leadership and direction to the Institution. This includes ensuring that there is an effective *Complaints Handling Procedure* with a robust investigation process which demonstrates that organisational learning is in place. The Principal may delegate responsibility for the procedure, but must receive assurance of complaints performance by way of regular reporting. The Principal should also ensure that complaints are used to identify service improvements, and that these improvements are implemented, and learning fed back to the wider organisation as appropriate.

(b) **Members of the Executive**

Members of the Executive may be involved in the investigation. As a senior officer they may be responsible for signing off response letters to complainants and therefore must be satisfied that the investigation is complete and that their response addresses all aspects of the complaint.

(c) **Complaints Investigator**

The Complaints Investigator is a suitably trained staff member responsible for the conduct of the complaints investigation and is involved in the investigation and the co-ordination of all aspects of the response to the

complainant. This may include preparing a comprehensive written report, including details of any recommended procedural changes to service delivery. Complaints Investigators must have a clear remit to investigate effectively and reach robust decisions on more complex complaints. This also requires clear direction and support from senior management on the extent and limits of discretion and responsibilities in investigating and resolving complaints, including the ability to identify failings, take effective remedial action and apologise, where it is appropriate to do so.

(d) **All staff**

A complaint may be made to any member of staff. All staff must, therefore, be aware of the *Complaints Handling Procedure* and how to handle and record complaints at the frontline resolution stage. They should also be aware of whom to refer a complaint to, in case they are not able to personally handle the matter. We encourage all staff to try to resolve complaints early, as close to the point of service delivery as possible, and quickly to prevent escalation.

(e) **SPSO Liaison Officer (or Officer with this responsibility)**

This staff member's role may include providing complaints information in an orderly, structured way within requested timescales, providing comments on factual accuracy on behalf of the Institution in response to SPSO reports, confirming recommendations have been implemented, and providing evidence to verify this.

## 10. COMPLAINTS ABOUT SENIOR STAFF

Complaints about members of the Executive can be difficult to handle as there may be a conflict of interest for the staff investigating the complaint. The Complaints Investigator for complaints concerning a member of the Executive will be the Principal or a nominee appointed by him/her. Where the complaint concerns the Principal then the Complaints Investigator will be the Chair of the Board of Governors or a nominee appointed by him/her.

## PART D: RECORDING, REPORTING, PUBLICISING AND LEARNING

### 11. PURPOSE

- 11.1 Valuable feedback may be obtained through complaints. One of the objectives of the *Complaints Handling Procedure* is to identify opportunities to improve provision of services across the University.
- 11.2 Staff will record all complaints and the University will use the complaints data for analysis and management reporting. By recording and using complaints information in this way, the causes of complaints can be identified, addressed

and, where appropriate, training opportunities can be identified and improvements introduced.

## 12. RECORDING COMPLAINTS

It is important that the University ensures that complaints are fully recorded and, as a minimum, the University shall record the following:

- name and contact details of the complainant and student enrolment number (if applicable);
- date of receipt of the complaint;
- how the complaint was received;
- category of complaint;
- staff member responsible for handling the complaint;
- department to which the complaint relates;
- action taken and outcome at frontline resolution stage;
- date the complaint was closed at the frontline resolution 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);
- underlying cause and remedial action taken (if applicable);
- response times at each stage. Details of any extensions to time scales and the relevant authorisations to these extensions.

The University has structured systems for recording complaints, their outcomes and any resulting action. The data collected shall be used for the internal reporting as described in paragraph 13 of this *Complaints Handling Procedure*.

## 13. REPORTING OF COMPLAINTS

13.1 The University has a system for the internal reporting of complaints information. Regularly reporting the analysis of complaints information helps to inform management of where improvements are required. Information reported internally will include:

- performance statistics, detailing complaints volumes, types and key performance information, for example on time taken and stage at which complaints were resolved;
- the trends and outcomes of complaints and the actions taken in response including examples to demonstrate how complaints have helped improve services.

13.2 This information will be reported at least quarterly to the University's senior management and at least annually to the *University's Academic Council and Board of Governors*. In addition, the University's Academic Regulations Sub-Committee shall have a role in monitoring complaints and outcomes with a view to learning from complaints (refer paragraph 15 of this *Complaints Handling Procedure*).



#### **14. PUBLICISING COMPLAINTS PERFORMANCE INFORMATION**

- 14.1 The University will publish on a quarterly basis a summary of complaint outcomes, trends and actions taken to improve services, with a focus on case studies and examples of how complaints have helped improve services. This may also include positive feedback from students and members of the public.
- 14.2 This demonstrates the University's approach to improving services on the basis of complaints and shows that complaints can influence our services. It also helps ensure transparency in the University's complaints handling service and will help to demonstrate to students and members of the public that the University values their complaints.
- 14.3 The University will report on complaints handling performance annually in line with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman's requirements. This includes performance statistics showing the volume and type of complaints and key performance details, for example on the time taken and the stage at which complaints were resolved.

#### **15. LEARNING FROM COMPLAINTS**

- 15.1 The Complaints Investigator will always satisfy themselves that all parties involved understand the findings of the investigation and any decisions made. The University has procedures in place to ensure that any identified issues are acted upon. These procedures facilitate:
- using complaints data to identify the root cause of complaints;
  - taking action to reduce the chance of this happening again;
  - recording the details of corrective action in the complaints file;
  - systematically reviewing complaints performance reports to improve performance.
- 15.2 The analysis of management reports detailing complaints performance will help to ensure that any trends or wider issues which may not be obvious from individual complaints are quickly identified and addressed. Where the University identifies the need for service improvement:
- an officer (or team) will be designated the 'owner' of the issue, with responsibility for ensuring that any identified action is taken
  - a target date will be set for the action to be implemented, and followed up on to ensure delivery within this timescale
  - where appropriate, performance in the service area will be monitored to ensure that the issue has been resolved.

#### **16. MAINTAINING CONFIDENTIALITY**

- 16.1 Confidentiality is an important factor in conducting complaints investigations. The University will always have regard to any legislative requirements; for example, data protection legislation and also internal policies on confidentiality and the use of complainant information. Complaints will be handled with an appropriate level of confidentiality and information released only to those who need it for the

purposes of investigating or responding to the complaint. No third party will be told any more about the investigation than is strictly necessary in order to obtain the information required from them.

- 16.2 Where a complaint has been raised against a student or member of staff and has been upheld, the complainant will be advised of this. However, it would not be appropriate to share specific details affecting specific students or staff members, particularly where disciplinary action is taken.

## **17. MANAGING UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR**

- 17.1 It is recognised that people may act out of character in times of trouble or distress. The circumstances leading to a complaint may result in the complainant acting in an unacceptable way. Complainants who display difficult behaviour may still have a legitimate grievance, and the Institution must therefore treat all complaints seriously and assess them properly.

- 17.2 The actions of complainants who are angry, demanding or persistent may result in unreasonable demands on time and resources or unacceptable behaviour towards the University's staff. The University will, therefore, put into place policies and procedures to protect staff from such unacceptable behaviour. These policies and procedures will include the requirement to inform the complainant of any decision to restrict their access, their right of appeal, and any procedures for reviewing such a decision to restrict contact.

## **18. SUPPORTING THE COMPLAINANT**

Anyone who receives, requests or is directly affected by the services the Institution provides has the right to access the University's *Complaints Handling Procedure*. Complainants who do not have English as a first language may need help with interpretation and translation services. Other complainants may have specific needs which the Institution will seek to address to ensure easy access to the *Complaints Handling Procedure* by making reasonable adjustments to help the complainant. There are a number of support services available which can provide helpful support to those who wish to pursue a complaint with the University.