

COUNCIL

Title of paper: Annual Student Casework Report 2022/23

Main purpose of the paper: For discussion

Presenter: Professor Ruth Valentine, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Education

Date of paper: January 2024

Purpose of the paper

To provide Council with the annual report.

Recommendations:

Council is asked to note the recommendations in the report..

Consultation to date (including any previous committee consideration and its outcome): University Education Committee, 14 February 2024; Senate, 28 February 2024 (endorsement and recommendation to Council).

Name of committee:	University Education Committee						
Title of paper:	Annual Report to UEC on Student Casework from 2022/23						
Purpose of the paper:							
For information		For discussion	X	For recommendation	X	For approval	
Author(s):	Dr Sarah May, Senior Student Policy and Resolution Manager; Angela McNeill, Director of Student Progress Service						
Date of paper:	January 2024						

1. Purpose of the paper
To update UEC on Formal Student Procedure Casework, including Appeals, Complaints, Assessment Irregularities, Disciplinary, PEC submissions, Support to Study and Fitness to Practise Cases from the 2022/23 Academic Year. Providing information on casework activity and an opportunity to consider learning issues for the University.
2. Key issues addressed in the paper:
The full report, including statistics in appendices, is attached: Annual Report highlighting patterns of activity and casework recommendations from the 2022/23 academic year Appendix 1 – Overview of Student Cases data during 2022/23 Appendix 2 – School Level 1 Appeal and Assessment Irregularity Statistics reported during 2022/23 Appendix 3 – University, Faculty and School Level PEC Statistics Report for 2022/23 Appendix 4 – Equality Monitoring Data from casework in 2022/23 Appendix 5 – Learning from Casework with a selection of recommendations from specific Cases
3. Notes & Recommendations:
UEC is asked in particular to note the following points, taken from the full report: <u>For the University</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. A significant increase in students pursuing their Complaints and Academic Appeals through all available levels of the procedure (including Level 3 request for review complaints to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education [OIA]). ii. The number of students referred to a Level 3 Fitness to Study hearing continues to rise, reflecting the increasing health challenges faced by students. This highlights the growing demand for resource within Academic Units and SHWS to support students experiencing health issues. iii. Reports of antisocial behavior and noise nuisance have decreased following a sustained effort by the University to develop and maintain key community partnerships in this area. iv. The 2022/23 year has continued to be difficult for many students, with the cost of living crisis and the rising prevalence of mental health difficulties presenting additional challenges. The overall number of PEC submissions and the number of individual students requesting adjustments (unique student PEC submissions) continue at a similar rate. However, school colleagues report difficulties in processing this high level volume of PEC requests, especially in cases where students require a quick response.

Recommendations for consideration

- a. **Recommendation:** To consider the PEC rules and whether certain types of evidence are not suitable, such as an on-line GP letter, noting that the PEC procedure now enables a student to submit a detailed statement where independent evidence cannot be obtained.
- b. **Recommendation:** To include consideration of student’s mitigating circumstances in the Review of the APR Process.
- c. **Recommendation:** To ask Academic Units to emphasise the seriousness of fabricating results to dissertation/project students and that all students should engage with supervisors during the dissertation/project module, rather than just producing a dissertation at the deadline, without the supervisor having seen it be developed.
- d. **Recommendation:** To review how colleague disciplinary processes and student complaints processes intersect, since each operates within different frameworks which are not always compatible with one another.
- e. **Recommendation:** To ask Graduate Schools to review the communication sent to PGR students when their programme is extended or a transferred to MPhil, to clarify the tuition fees payable and whether they need to seek advice from the Visa Support team
- f. **Recommendation:** To consider the appointment of an independent chair when the student’s case (PEC or BoE) is reviewed afresh at the school stage to avoid the perception of bias, following appeal.
- g. **Recommendation:** To keep reasonable adjustments under review (via SSP) and to take action when a student reports any problems or shortfall in support.

4. Consultation to date (including any previous committee consideration and its outcome):

Annually the Student Progress Service holds the following review events of casework and procedures;

- A meeting with all appointed Student Disciplinary Panel members & SPS Casework staff
- A meeting with all appointed Academic Appeal Adjudicators & SPS Casework staff
- A meeting with senior colleagues from Faculty and Central Services to discuss student complaints

In addition, the PEC Review Group continues to review the PEC policy & procedure, on-line processes and student communications

5. Further committee consideration/approvals required:

Wide consultation with key stakeholders, including Student Union Sabs, takes place whilst reviewing the University’s student procedures.

6. Resourcing implications:

Student Casework requires considerable resource of time from a wide range of Academic and PS colleagues across the University

7. Is the paper to be closed? (If yes, please state the reason below):

No

A. Formal Student Casework Summary

This report accompanies the annual statistics for casework handled by the Student Progress Service (SPS) during the 2022/23 academic year. Once again, the 2022/23 academic year was significantly affected by Industrial Action, including a prolonged Marking and Assessment Boycott. This impacted on student casework, both in terms of the total number of formal cases investigated, and the timings of Academic Appeals. Since many Academic Appeals relating to the 2022/23 year are still being investigated, this report considers only cases submitted prior to 1st November 2023.

Appendix 1 provides data on the types of cases considered and their outcomes, presented together with information from the previous four years for comparison purposes.

Appendix 2 provides a detailed breakdown of formal casework according to the protected characteristics of students involved in each type of case. This allows us to examine if there are any specific equality issues relating to student casework.

Appendix 3 provides School-level (Level 1) Assessment Irregularities (now Academic Misconduct) and Academic Queries case statistics.

Appendix 4 provides School-level Personal Extenuating Circumstances (PEC) data.

Appendix 5 gives specific student case examples which recommend how University practices and procedures could be revised to meet the changing needs of students involved in formal casework during 2022/23.

Key points have been highlighted under each student procedure separately, to reflect patterns of student casework activity during the 2022/23 academic year:

- 1. Academic Appeals.** The number of formal Academic Appeals made in relation to awards and marks has been affected by the Marking and Assessment Boycott during the 2022/23 academic year. Formal Academic Appeals of this nature, may only be made against marks confirmed by a Boards of Examiners. Since there has been a significant delay in Boards of Examiners confirming profiles of marks, many Academic Appeals relating to the 2022/23 academic year were submitted after 1 November 2023, and will be reported next year. During 2022/23 there were 52 Academic Appeals referred to Level 3 of the procedure, a 63% increase from 2021/22. (**Appendices 1 and 3 refer**)
- 2. Academic Misconduct.** The number of Level 1 Assessment Irregularity cases reported by Academic Units decreased for 2022/23 (514 cases in total, compared to 698 in 2021/22). This downward trend is reflected in the number of Level 2 formal investigations referred to SPS (59 in 2022/23 compared to 70 in 2021/22). Although this may indicate a decrease in overall cases, it is more likely to be due to a delay in reporting potential academic misconduct as a result of the Marking and Assessment Boycott. 8 serious Academic Misconduct cases were referred to a Student Disciplinary Committee, including some involving reported Artificial Intelligence (AI) which are difficult to identify and prove; this is an increase of 100% from 2021/22. (**Appendices 1 and 3 refer**)

3. **Disciplinary Cases.** The total number of formal disciplinary cases in 2022/23 decreased by 14% compared to 2021/22. There has been a significant reduction in formal reports of antisocial behavior (-25% from 2021/22), likely as a result of extensive community work and key partnerships with Northumbria University, Northumbria Police and Newcastle City Council. There has also been a decrease in disciplinary cases related to discrimination and hate-related misconduct compared to 2021/22, with only one case reported, hopefully as a result of work on 'Changing the Culture'. Only three disciplinary cases were referred to a level 3 Student Disciplinary Committee during 2022/23, (*Appendix 1 refers*).

4. **Complaints.** The highest number of complaints (56%) were in relation to Academic Provision; this included 15 formal complaints (25% of all complaint submissions) about disruption caused by Industrial Action. Complaints about disruption due to Industrial Action in the 2022/23 year continue to be reported this academic year, particularly asking for financial compensation payments. 59% of all complaints were either upheld or partly upheld and various resolutions, including financial payments, were offered to complainants. While data relating to informal Level 1 Complaints administered by school colleagues is not available, it is believed that these were substantial in number due to the periods of Industrial Action. Although 11 complainants progressed their complaints by submitting requests for Level 3 Reviews, only one of these cases was admitted for reconsideration. (*Appendix 1 refers*)

5. **Support to Study.** The number of Support to Study referrals to Level 3 resulting in a case conference fell by 26% in 2022/23, possibly as a result of clearer guidance for Schools regarding when to refer for Fitness to Study proceedings. Despite this decrease, the number of case conferences remained high (60 in total). Of these, 18 cases were referred to formal Level 3 Fitness to Study hearings (*Appendix 1 refers*), which resulted in:
 - 9 students deemed to be fit to study;
 - 8 suspensions of studies;
 - 1 termination of studies.

6. **Fitness to Practise Cases.** The number of Fitness to Practise Cases for 2022/23 remained consistent with numbers from previous years. Historically, the majority of Fitness to Practise cases involved MBBS students, as this was by far the largest programme subject to this procedure. However, during 2022/23, cases from other Schools within the Faculty of Medical Sciences outnumbered the MBBS cases. Rather than indicating a rise in professionalism-related issues across the Faculty, this may indicate the wider adoption of this procedure to manage cases.

The cases for 2022/23 are shown below:

Professionalism Warning (FTP referral threshold not breached)	Investigation-Warning and conditions	Panel – then continue with conditions	Appeal (FTP)	Termination of Studies
11	10	3	0	0

**not all new cases*

The process of review in relation to students meeting on-going conditions and maintaining a professional approach to studies has meant students 'staying within' the process for a longer

period of time. Monitoring and review mechanisms are working well. This has, however, increased the administrative burden for each case.

7. **Personal Extenuating Circumstances (PEC) Cases.** PEC Summary statistics for 2022/23 have been produced using available NESS reports and were forwarded to Schools for checking against their records (**Appendix 4**). The 2022/23 year has continued to be difficult for many students, with the cost of living crisis and the rising prevalence of mental health difficulties presenting additional challenges. The overall number of PEC submissions decreased slightly in 2022/23, with the number of individual students requesting adjustments (unique student PEC submissions) decreasing at a similar rate (-3% compared to 2021/22). However, school colleagues continue to report difficulties in processing the volume of PEC requests, especially in cases where students require a quick response. In addition, there has been an increase in the number of PEC cases being referred to other student procedures (for example, Support to Study); this appears to reflect the Schools' experience that student PEC submissions continue to report more serious and enduring circumstances than in previous years.
8. **Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA).** The number of students taking their case to the OIA, following completion of all available University procedures, increased from 14 to 22 (6 of which the OIA found to be not eligible to be considered). This reflects the general direction of student casework, whereby students are becoming increasingly likely to follow University procedures through each level until all avenues for appeal have been exhausted. Of the cases submitted to the OIA during the 2022/23 academic year, only 2 were partly justified (upheld against the University). This low number may be the result of the University now providing detailed case reports to the OIA enabling the University to explain why decisions and actions were taken. (**Appendix 1 refers**)

B. Equalities Monitoring

SPS has continued to track equalities monitoring data relating to students who are the subject of formal casework, in order to identify and address any concerns relating to specific groups of students. **Appendix 4** shows equalities monitoring data for the 2020/21, 2021/22, and 2022/23 academic years in relation to the following characteristics: gender, fee status, ethnic origin, disability status and level of study. The following patterns have been identified from the summary data:

a) Gender

The number of female students involved in Fitness to Study cases rose significantly during the 2022/23 academic year (63% of all Fitness to Study cases were in relation to female students, a sharp increase from 38% in 2021/22). Although they account for only 46% of the student population, male students continue to be statistically more likely to be the subject of disciplinary investigations (72%) and investigations related to academic misconduct (63%).

b) Fee status

The number of formal cases involving international students rose across all types of casework in 2022/23, compared to 2021/22, despite the numbers of international students registered at the University remaining similar to previous years. The most significant change was in

relation to disciplinary cases: in 2021/22, only 14% of formal disciplinary cases were in relation to international students; in 2022/23, this number was 39%.

c) Ethnicity

The number of Chinese students involved in formal student casework rose significantly across all case types. Despite accounting for only 11% of the student population, approximately 39% of all academic misconduct cases and 20% of all Fitness to Study cases in 2022/23 were in relation to Chinese students (in 2021/22 these figures were 27.7% and 3.45%, respectively).

d) Disability

The number of students involved in Fitness to Study cases with no previously declared disability continued to rise in 2022/23 (accounting for 59.3% of all Fitness to Study cases, compared to 46.1% in 2020/21). Of those students with declared known disabilities, students with mental health conditions continue to account for a significant proportion of Fitness to Study cases (20.4% of cases, whereas only 5% of the student population declared a mental health disability). There has also been a significant increase in the number of students involved in Fitness to Study cases who have multiple disabilities (13% in 2022/23, compared to just 3.5% in 2021/22), reflecting the general view that cases are becoming increasingly complex.

e) Level of Study

The numbers of Postgraduate students involved in Fitness to Study cases fell slightly in 2022/23; however across all other types of casework, the proportion of cases relating to Postgraduate students increased. The sharpest increase was that of postgraduate taught academic appeals (36% of all cases, up from 17% in the previous year).

C. Learning through Casework

The OIA Good Practice Framework specifically requests Universities show that regulations, practices and procedures are reviewed as a result of actual casework experiences. Some student case examples are highlighted in **Appendix 5** to demonstrate the practice of reviewing practices and procedures as a result of student casework recommendations during 2022/23. these include;

Source of Learning: Academic Appeals

All Appeal Adjudicators (AA) have the opportunity to raise specific points that the Academic Unit/University can learn from. The following are examples of points which have been raised and passed on:

- a. **Recommendation:** Appeal Adjudicators have requested that UEC consider whether the PEC rules should be revised to highlight whether certain types of evidence is not suitable, such as an on-line GP letter, noting that the PEC procedure now enables a student to submit a detailed statement where independent evidence cannot be obtained.

- b. **Recommendation:** That the current review of the Research Student APR process includes consideration of student's mitigating circumstances.

Source of Learning: Assessment Irregularity Cases

Student Disciplinary Committees are held to consider significant academic misconduct cases and determine an appropriate sanction. After Chairing a number of the committee hearings reporting academic misconduct with similar irregularities in projects, Student Disciplinary Panel Members have suggested activities schools could do in an attempt to reduce misconduct in student dissertations.

- c. **Recommendation:** that Schools emphasise the seriousness of fabricating results, including it in Dissertation handbooks and repeating it in a suitable lectures/seminars, held as scheduled learning within the Dissertation module, and that all dissertation students should engage with supervisors during the dissertation module. It was felt this would have the dual action of supporting struggling students and making it difficult for students just to produce a dissertation at the submission deadline, without the supervisor having seen it be developed over the period of the module.

Source of Learning: Complaints

- d. **Recommendation:** To review how colleague disciplinary processes and student complaints processes intersect, since each operates within different frameworks which are not always compatible with one another (for example, the University is expected to provide clear outcomes to students regarding actions that have been taken as a result of their complaints, whereas People Services are limited as to the details that can be shared with students, due to employment law).
- e. **Recommendation:** Graduate Schools to review the communication sent to PGR students to clarify the tuition fees payable and whether they need to seek advice from the Visa Support team when their programme is extended or a transferred to MPhil

Source of Learning: Office of the Independent Adjudicator

The University adheres to the guidelines provided in the OIA Good Practice Framework chapters for its student procedures and the following recommendations have resulted where they have found cases 'justified' or 'partly justified'

- f. **Recommendation:** That the perception of bias is avoided, stating that an independent Chair should be appointed to consider the student's case afresh at the School stage, when the Chair has been involved in the student's appeal at an earlier stage of the process, requesting that the wording of the procedure is clear and applied consistently.
- g. **Recommendation:** That it is good practice to keep reasonable adjustments under review and to take action when a student reports any problems or shortfall in support.

Appendix 1 Casework Stats 2022/23

Appendix 1 Casework Stats 2022/23 Casework statistics 2022/23

1.1. Summary of formal University cases*

Formal University cases		2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Academic Appeals		103	87	163	145
Academic Misconduct	Plagiarism, collusion, etc.	53	74	70	67
	Exam Irregularities	14	0	81	52
Disciplinary Cases		147	1533 ⁺	299	256
Complaints		53	50	69	59
Fitness to Study	Level 3 Case conferences	N/A	N/A	81 (inc. referrals to L3)	60 (inc. referrals to L3)
	Level 3 Panel Hearings	7	14	15	18
TOTAL <u>FORMAL</u> CASES		412	1831	764	657

*Formal casework refers to all dealings handled under the academic appeal, assessment irregularity, student disciplinary, complaint and support to study procedures at level 2 by the Student Progress Service. All data on cases should be handled with caution – e.g. one disciplinary case could involve several students

⁺Includes COVID breaches in the 2020/21 academic year

Appendix 1 Casework Stats 2022/23

Other Cases (not formal)	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
School Process Academic Misconduct (see Appendix 2)	425	523	632	698
Level 1 Appeal Submissions (see Appendix 2)	467	552	755	951

Level 3 Review Requests to Academic Registrar's Office	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Formal Academic Appeals	n/a	16	32	52
Formal Complaints	n/a	7	9	11

1.2. *Formal Academic Misconduct 2022/23*

Faculty	Plagiarism (inc. collusion, dishonesty, contract cheating)			Exam irregularities			Referred to SDC		
	UG	PGT	PGR	UG	PGT	PGR	UG	PGT	PGR
HASS	19	13	0	16	11	0	3	3	0
SAGe	6	21	0	15	5	0	0	1	0
FMS	1	1	0	5	0	0	0	0	0
INTO	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	26	35	0	36	16	0	3	4	0

Appendix 1 Casework Stats 2022/23

1.3. Formal Complaints 2022/23

1.3.1. By Faculty

Formal complaints 2022/23 by Faculty	Complaints submitted			Complaint Outcome							
	UG	PGT	PGR	Not progressed by complainant	Informal resolution	Upheld	Partly upheld	Not upheld	Dealt with under another process	Ongoing	Rejected by SPS
HASS	17	6	10	6	0	2	18	5	1	1	0
SAgE	6	1	6	0	1	1	4	7	0	0	0
FMS	11	0	2	1	0	2	6	4	0	0	0
INTO	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	34	7	18	7	1	5	28	16	1	1	0

Appendix 1 Casework Stats 2022/23

1.3.2. By Complaint Type

Complaint Type	Complaints submitted			Complaint Outcome							
	UG	PGT	PGR	Not progressed by complainant	Informal resolution	Upheld	Partly upheld	Not upheld	Dealt with under another process	Ongoing	Rejected by SPS
Academic Provision	22	4	7	4	1	2	15	10	1	0	0
Academic Unit/Service	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Central Services	2	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	0
Fees/Funding	1	0	2	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0
Staff Conduct	2	0	2	2	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
Equal Opportunities	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Other	6	3	6	1	0	2	7	5	0	0	0
Total	34	7	18	7	1	5	28	16	1	1	0

Appendix 1 Casework Stats 2022/23

1.4. Formal Disciplinary Cases 2022/23

Case Type	Level of study			SPS Outcome					SDC Outcome				
	UG	PGT	PGR	Ongoing	No further action	Caution	Warning and/or fine	Refer to SDC	No further action	Warning and/or fine	Suspension/deferred expulsion	Expulsion with immediate effect	
Antisocial behaviour/noise nuisance	142	5	2	0	40	75	34	0	0	0	0	0	
Assault/violence/intimidation	4	0	0	0	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	
Criminal damage	3	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	
Discrimination/Hate-related incident	1	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Dishonesty	2	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	
Harassment/Bullying	4	3	0	0	2	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	
Illegal/Controlled substances	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	
Sexual misconduct	12*	1	3	1	1	7	4	3	2	0	1	0	
Other	52	17	1	0	8	50	12	0	0	0	0	0	
Subtotal	221	27	6	1	52	141	56	4	2	0	1	1	
Total	254			254					4				

*Includes one case where the student withdrew from University before the case could be fully investigated and one disciplinary appeal case.

Appendix 1 Casework Stats 2022/23

1.5. OIA Cases

Please note that OIA cases are listed by the year in which the case was opened with the OIA; however, it can take several months to reach an outcome.

1.5.1. Case numbers and outcomes by year

OIA cases*	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Justified	2	0	1	0
Partly Justified	2	1	1	2
Not justified	15	14	6	10
Settled with the OIA	2	2	6	1
Ongoing	0	0	0	3
Total	21	17	14	16

1.5.2. Case numbers and outcomes by Faculty 2022/23

Faculty	Complaints submitted			OIA Outcome						
	UG	PGT	PGR	Not eligible	Settled with OIA	Not justified	Partly justified	Justified	Withdrawn by student	Ongoing
HASS	1	5	0	3	0	2	0	0	0	1
SAgE	2	1	2	0	2	2	0	0	0	1
FMS	7	2	1	1	1	4	2	0	0	2
INTO	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	10	8	3	4	3	8	2	0	0	4

Appendix 1 Casework Stats 2022/23

1.5.3. OIA cases by case type 2022/23

Case Type	Complaints submitted			OIA Outcome						
	UG	PGT	PGR	Not eligible	Settled with OIA	Not justified	Partly justified	Justified	Withdrawn by student	Ongoing
Appeals	7	7	0	4	1	6	1	0	0	2
Academic Misconduct	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Complaint	3	1	2	1	0	3	1	0	0	1
Disciplinary	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Support to Study/Fitness to Practice	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	10	8	3	5	1	10	2	0	0	3

Appendix 2: Equalities Monitoring Data 2022/23

a) Gender

	% General student population			% Disciplinary			% Complaints			% Academic Misconduct			% Academic Appeals			% Fitness to study		
	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Female	53	53	53	42	23	28	37	56.5	54	39	35	37	31	39	41	46	38	63
Male	47	47	46	58	77	72	63	42	43	61	65	63	68	60	59	54	62	37
Other	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1.5	3	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

b) Fee status

	% General student population			% Disciplinary			% Complaints			% Academic Misconduct			% Academic Appeals			% Fitness to study		
	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Home	69	67	68	75	86	61	76	65	54	43	42	38	47	55	42	69	76	72
International/EU	31	33	32	25	14	39	24	35	46	57	58	62	53	45	58	31	24	28
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Appendix 2: Equalities Monitoring Data

c) Ethnicity

	% General Student population			% Disciplinary			% Complaints			% Academic Misconduct			% Academic Appeals			% Fitness to Study		
	20/21	21/22	22/23	20/21	21/22	22/23	20/21	21/22	22/23	20/21	21/22	22/23	20/21	21/22	22/23	20/21	21/22	22/23
Any other White Background	0	0.1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Arab	3	2.6	2	0	0	2.7	2	7.2	3.5	3.9	3	1.8	6.8	3.4	7.6	0	6.9	0
Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi	1	0.6	1	0	0	0	0	1.4	0	0	2.3	1.8	2.7	2.1	1.4	0	6.9	1.9
Asian or Asian British - Indian	3	3.6	4	3	1.3	7	2	4.35	5.3	10.4	11	8.8	8	8.9	6.9	7.7	3.45	5.6
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	1	1.5	2	4	3.8	2.7	0	1.4	0	1.3	3	3.5	5.4	8.9	2.7	0	0	1.9
Black or Black British - African	2	1.6	2	3	2.5	6	4	1.4	5.3	0	1.5	2.6	1.4	4.8	2.1	15.4	6.9	7.4
Black or Black British - Caribbean	0	0.2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.8	0.9	0	0.7	1.4	0	0	0
Chinese	13	11.2	11	11	3.8	18.5	2	5.8	14.3	33.8	27.7	39.8	21.6	19.2	25.5	7.7	3.45	20.4
Gypsy, Traveller or Irish Traveller	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Information refused	1	1.2	1	0	0	1.7	0	0	0	1.3	3.8	1.8	4	4.8	0.7	0	6.9	0
Mixed - White and Asian	1	1.4	2	2	2.5	1.7	0	0	1.8	0	0.8	0	2.7	1.4	1.4	7.7	0	1.9
Mixed - White and Black African	0	0.3	0	0	1.3	0	0	0	0	0	1.5	0	1.4	0	1.4	0	0	0
Mixed - White and Black Caribbean	1	0.5	0	1	0	0.9	0	0	0	0	0	0.9	0	0	0	0	0	1.9
Not known	1	1.1	1	1	0	1.7	6	1.4	1.8	1.3	0	1.8	5.4	0	4.8	0	0	0
Other Asian background	3	2.7	3	3	1.3	2.7	2	2.9	1.8	7.8	3.8	5.3	1.4	4.1	2.7	0	3.45	0
Other Black background	0	0.2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other Ethnic background	0	0.7	1	0	0	0	0	1.4	1.8	0	0.8	0.9	0	2.1	1.4	0	3.45	0
Other Mixed background	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1.4	3.6	2.6	1.5	0.9	0	0.7	2.1	7.7	10.3	0
White	65	62.6	60	69	77.2	52.7	80	67	59	36.3	31.5	27.4	39.2	30	31	53.8	48.3	59
Information not provided	4	6.9	9	2	6.3	1.7	2	4.35	1.8	1.3	6.2	1.8	0	8.9	6.9	0	0	0
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Appendix 2: Equalities Monitoring Data

d) Disability

	% General student population			% Disciplinary			% Complaints			% Academic Misconduct			% Academic Appeals			% Fitness to Study		
	20/21	21/22	22/23	20/21	21/22	22/23	20/21	21/22	22/23	20/21	21/22	22/23	20/21	21/22	22/23	20/21	21/22	22/23
A disability not listed	0.38	0.4	1	0	0	0.9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.7	0.7	0	0	3.7
Autistic Spectrum Disorder	0.48	0.62	1	0.8	1.3	0.9	2	1.4	0	0	0	0	0	0.7	0.7	7.7	7	0
Blind / partially sighted	0.07	0.07	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1.4	0	0	7.7	0	0
Deaf / hearing impairment	0.19	0.2	0	0	0	0	0	1.4	0	0	0	0.9	0	0	0	0	0	1.8
Information refused	0.01	0.01	0	0	0	0.9	0	0	0	0	1.53	0	0	2.7	0	0	0	0
Learning difficulty, e.g. dyslexia	3.76	4.3	5	2.3	15.2	8.3	14.3	0	11.9	1.3	3.06	0.9	5.4	8.2	3.4	0	7	1.8
Mental health difficulties	2.51	3.4	5	4.6	7.6	1.9	8.2	6	6.7	2.6	2.31	1.8	2.7	4.8	7.6	30.8	24	20.4
Multiple disabilities	0.76	1.1	1	1.5	0	0	0	3	3.4	0	0.8	0	1.4	4.1	2.8	0	3.5	13
No known disability	88.5	83.4	79	89.2	73.4	87.1	69.4	84	64.4	94.8	92.3	94.6	85	78.8	79.3	46.1	55	59.3
Other disability	0.18	0.2	1	0	0	0	2	0	3.4	1.3	0	0	0	0	0.7	7.7	0	0
Personal care support	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3.5	0
Unseen disability eg. diabetes, epilepsy	0.87	1	0	0.8	2.5	0	0	1.4	5.1	0	0	1.8	1.4	0	0.7	0	0	0
Wheelchair user/ mobility difficulties	0.15	0.1	0	0	0	0	0	1.4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Information not provided	2.13	5.2	7	0.8	0	0	4.1	0	0	0	0	0	2.7	0	4.1	0	0	0
Information refused	0.01	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
N/A	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1.4	5.1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Appendix 2: Equalities Monitoring Data

e) Level of Study

	% General student population			% Disciplinary			% Complaints			% Academic Misconduct			% Academic Appeals			% Fitness to study		
	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
UG	71	72	70	82	89	76	63	68	58	70	62	55	78	83	64	92.3	76	80
PG	29	28	30	18	11	24	37	32	42	30	38	45	22	17	36	7.7	24	20
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Appendix 3: Faculty Academic Queries and Academic Misconduct Data 2022/23

3.1. Academic Queries: HaSS

	Level of Study			Type of appeal				Outcome		
	UG	PGT	PGR	Progression/ Classification	PEC	Unsat. Progress Decision	DPD Decision	Academic Failure	Upheld/ Partly upheld	Decision changed
Combined Honours Centre (<i>inc. Philosophical Studies</i>)	5	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	3	0
Architecture, Planning and Landscape	36	24	0	48	11	0	0	1	43	16
Arts and Cultures	14	15	0	24	5	0	0	0	16	1
Newcastle University Business School	79	54	0	125	8	0	0	0	56	11
Education, Communication and Language Sciences	9	15	0	23	0	0	0	1	10	6
English Literature, Language and Linguistics	20	1	0	21	0	0	0	0	17	10
Geography, Politics and Sociology	13	1	0	12	2	0	0	0	11	7
History, Classics and Archaeology	35	0	0	29	6	0	0	0	28	10
Modern Languages	7	2	0	9	0	0	0	0	2	1
Newcastle Law School	35	8	0	38	5	0	0	0	28	10
Faculty Office / Graduate School (<i>inc. Occasional</i>)	0	0	6	6	0	0	0	0	2	0
HASS Total	379			340	37	0	0	2	216	72

3.2. Academic Queries: SAgE

	Level of Study			Type of appeal				Outcome		
	UG	PGT	PGR	Progression/ Classification	PEC	Unsat. Progress Decision	DPD Decision	Academic Failure	Upheld/ Partly upheld	Decision changed
Faculty Office/ Graduate School	0	0	6	6	0	0	0	0	4	0
School of Computing	29	9	0	35	3	0	0	0	25	19
School of Engineering	166	66	0	215	17	0	0	0	152	80
School of Natural & Environmental Sciences	94	13	0	98	8	1	0	0	71	46
School of Mathematics, Statistics & Physics	45	0	0	38	7	0	0	0	35	15
SAgE Total	428			1	0	0	287	160	287	160

Appendix 3: Faculty Academic Queries and Academic Misconduct data

3.3. Academic Queries: FMS

	Level of Study			Type of appeal					Outcome	
	UG	PGT	PGR	Progression/ Classification	PEC	Unsat. Progress Decision	DPD Decision	Academic Failure	Upheld/ Partly upheld	Decision changed
Faculty Office/ Graduate School (inc. all institutes) & NuMed	8	8	0	14	2	0	0	0	1	0
School of Medical Education	56	0	0	56	0	0	0	0	7	6
School of Biomedical Sciences	31	1	0	28	4	0	0	0	12	1
School of Dental Sciences	19	1	0	19	1	0	0	0	11	4
School of Pharmacy	19	0	0	18	0	0	1	0	16	12
School of Psychology	15	0	0	12	3	0	0	0	4	0
FMS Total	158			147	10	0	1	0	51	23

3.4. Academic Queries: INTO

	Level of Study			Total
	UG	PGT	PGR	
	9	0	0	9
INTO Total	21			

3.5. Academic Queries: total cases

	Level of Study			Type of appeal					Outcome	
	UG	PGT	PGR	Progression/ Classification	PEC	Unsat. Progress Decision	DPD Decision	Academic Failure	Upheld/ Partly upheld	Decision changed
	740	220	12	886	82	1	0	1	554	225
University Total	972			886	82	1	0	1	554	225

Appendix 3: Faculty Academic Queries and Academic Misconduct data

3.6. Academic Misconduct: HaSS

	Level of Study			Total
	UG	PGT	PGR	
Combined Honours Centre (<i>inc. Philosophical Studies</i>)	15	0	0	15
Architecture, Planning and Landscape	45	43	0	88
Arts and Cultures	18	41	0	59
Newcastle University Business School	21	23	0	44
Education, Communication and Language Sciences	8	20	0	28
English Literature, Language and Linguistics	14	0	0	14
Geography, Politics and Sociology	8	1	0	9
History, Classics and Archaeology	38	3	0	41
Modern Languages	5	3	0	8
Newcastle Law School	15	8	0	23
Faculty Office / Graduate School (<i>inc. Occasional</i>)	0	0	1	1
HASS Total	330			

3.7. Academic Misconduct: SAgE

	Level of Study			Total
	UG	PGT	PGR	
Faculty Office/ Graduate School	0	0	2	2
School of Computing	22	31	0	53
School of Engineering	12	30	0	42
School of Natural & Environmental Sciences	20	10	0	30
School of Mathematics, Statistics & Physics	27	0	0	27
SAgE Total	154			

Appendix 3: Faculty Academic Queries and Academic Misconduct data

3.8. Academic Misconduct: FMS

	Level of Study			Total
	UG	PGT	PGR	
Faculty Office/ Graduate School (inc. all institutes) & NuMed	4	0	1	5
School of Medical Education	0	0	0	0
School of Biomedical Sciences	5	0	0	5
School of Dental Sciences	5	0	0	5
School of Pharmacy	2	0	0	2
School of Psychology	4	0	0	4
FMS Total	21			

3.9. Academic Misconduct: INTO

	Level of Study			Total
	UG	PGT	PGR	
	9	0	0	9
INTO Total	21			

**Appendix 4: University and Faculty PEC Statistics
2022/23**

4.1. University PEC Statistics 2021/22 and 2022/23

Faculty	Cohort Size		Total PECs		Unique Student PECs		Rejected PECs		Extensions		Extensions (self-cert)		Exemptions		Deferrals		Referrals		BoE Discretion	
	21/22	22/23	21/22	22/23	21/22	22/23	21/22	22/23	21/22	22/23	21/22	22/23	21/22	22/23	21/22	22/23	21/22	22/23	21/22	22/23
FMS	5387	5683	3361	3043	1432	1339	538	467	1186	965	753	941	84	19	685	682	163	130	863	766
HaSS	13420	13735	22761	21558	7497	7067	2359	2486	15870	12104	6960	9612	130	126	1885	1719	39	407	4497	3730
SAGe	7287	7442	11586	11778	3874	4027	3874	2075	5338	4458	3804	6284	559	631	1695	1331	7	3	1659	2521
University Total	26094	26860	37708	36379	12803	12433	6771	5028	22394	17527	11517	16837	773	776	4265	3732	209	540	7019	7017

4.2. FMS PEC Statistics 2021/22 and 2022/23

School	Cohort Size		Total PECs		Unique Student PECs		Rejected PECs		Extensions		Extensions (self-cert)		Exemptions		Deferrals		Referrals		BoE Discretion	
	21/22	22/23	21/22	22/23	21/22	22/23	21/22	22/23	21/22	22/23	21/22	22/23	21/22	22/23	21/22	22/23	21/22	22/23	21/22	22/23
MBBS	1718	1763	448	427	71	80	31	32	48	82	49	69	35	0	209	164	0	0	5	0
Biomedical Sciences	1617	1630	1246	1151	641	584	150	160	506	467	273	279	46	13	285	314	1	2	340	360
Dental Sciences	476	490	93	3	64	3	13	1	44	2	25	0	0	0	27	0	0	0	0	0
Psychology	1053	1207	1194	1138	473	484	315	238	446	324	329	500	2	5	113	179	0	5	359	269
Pharmacy	523	593	380	324	183	188	29	36	142	90	77	93	1	1	51	25	162	123	159	137
Total No. for FMS	5387	5683	3361	3043	1432	1339	538	467	1186	965	753	941	84	19	685	682	163	130	863	766

Appendix 4: University and Faculty PEC Statistics

4.3. HaSS PEC Statistics 2021/22 and 2022/23

School	Cohort Size		Total PECs		Unique Student PECs		Rejected PECs		Extensions		Extensions (self-cert)		Exemptions		Deferrals		Referrals		BoE Discretion	
	21/22	22/23	21/22	22/23	21/22	22/23	21/22	22/23	21/22	22/23	21/22	22/23	21/22	22/23	21/22	22/23	21/22	22/23	21/22	22/23
APL	1230	1264	2082	1747	738	691	219	254	763	957	763	763	1	1	194	190	0	11	182	105
Arts and Cultures	1386	1483	2313	2371	802	789	230	405	506	1453	506	1601	12	6	96	145	14	2	209	133
School X	765	884	1500	1825	461	552	37	50	412	1299	412	716	4	16	75	76	22	390	487	532
ECLS	917	947	1300	1349	419	443	118	117	256	1041	256	358	2	0	44	89	0	3	128	187
ELLL	892	878	1827	1880	548	541	32	63	660	1086	660	873	33	37	180	287	0	0	187	182
GPS	1598	1624	4422	4331	1184	1144	228	176	1820	2447	1820	2127	41	19	191	225	1	0	876	819
HCA	1038	1011	2883	2383	745	654	363	326	769	1536	769	1065	7	2	171	134	0	0	478	268
Law	821	974	962	1005	381	368	227	269	213	375	213	292	3	0	43	72	0	1	128	304
Modern Languages	873	880	738	902	331	379	53	159	264	379	264	339	7	9	73	32	2	0	224	283
NUBS	3900	3790	4734	3765	1888	1506	852	667	1297	1531	1297	1478	20	36	818	469	0	0	1598	917
Total HaSS	13420	13735	22761	21558	7497	7067	2359	2486	6960	12104	6960	9612	130	126	1885	1719	39	407	4497	3730

4.4. SAgE PEC Statistics 2021/22 and 2022/23

School	Cohort Size		Total PECs		Unique Student PECs		Rejected PECs		Extensions		Extensions (self-cert)		Exemptions		Deferrals		Referrals		BoE Discretion	
	21/22	22/23	21/22	22/23	21/22	22/23	21/22	22/23	21/22	22/23	21/22	22/23	21/22	22/23	21/22	22/23	21/22	22/23	21/22	22/23
Natural & Environmental Sciences	1973	1975	3428	2976	1114	1079	495	351	1723	1286	953	1324	159	115	358	373	0	0	656	461
Engineering	2969	2921	4038	3829	1408	1419	948	1009	1496	957	1001	1464	70	49	640	419	6	3	128	991
Computing	1409	1614	2301	3332	780	1030	413	654	1364	1185	1063	2045	39	37	190	210	0	0	151	422
Maths, Stats and Physics	936	932	1819	1641	572	499	213	61	755	1030	787	1451	291	430	507	329	1	0	724	647
SAgE total	7287	7442	11586	11778	3874	4027	2069	2075	5338	4458	3804	6284	559	631	1695	1331	7	3	1659	2521

Appendix 5: Learning through Casework 2022/23

The OIA Good Practice Framework specifically requests Universities show that practices and procedures are reviewed as a result of actual casework experiences. Some case examples are highlighted below to demonstrate the practice of reviewing practices and procedures as a result of student casework within the University during 2022/23. Some recommendations have been highlighted for consideration by UEC:

1. Source of Learning: Academic Appeals

All Appeal Adjudicators (AAs) have the opportunity to raise specific points that the Academic Unit/University can learn from. The following are examples of points which have been raised:

- a. When considering taught student PEC appeals, Appeal Adjudicators have noted that some schools have evidence requirements over and above those identified in the PEC policy and procedure, e.g. that the medical evidence must be from a UK doctor/hospital or that it should not be from an on-line medical service. One Appeal Adjudicator felt that this may be discriminatory against groups of students or inequitable as different schools are operating different rules.

UEC is requested to consider whether the PEC rules should be revised to highlight whether certain types of evidence is not suitable, noting that the PEC procedure now enables a student to submit a detailed statement where independent evidence cannot be obtained.

- b. When considering Research Student academic appeals, Appeal Adjudicators are mindful of the deadline adjustments made to Project Approval, Annual Progress Review (APR), and Examination arrangements as a result of student individual circumstances, usually called mitigating circumstances.

An Appeal Adjudicator specifically commented;

- i. That PGR students who have been given multiple extensions or resubmissions which ultimately end in their studies being terminated may be better served with an early determination that the student is unable to successfully complete a PhD and terminated, before their studies stretch to a 3rd and 4th year.
- ii. That the PGR APR system is overly complicated and needs to be simplified, recommending that the process is streamlined and more responsive to a student's needs

The Research APR process is currently under review, but a recommendation is made for mitigating circumstances consideration to be included in the on-line review/examination process.

2. Source of Learning: Academic Misconduct

- a. Student Disciplinary Committees are held to consider significant academic misconduct cases and determine an appropriate sanction. After Chairing several committee hearings investigating academic misconduct, with similar irregularities in the dissertations, a colleague suggested activities schools could consider in an attempt to reduce misconduct in student dissertations.

- i. Students fabricating research data. Schools could emphasise the seriousness of this type of academic misconduct, including it in Dissertation handbooks and repeating it in suitable lectures/seminars, held as scheduled learning within the Dissertation module.

- ii. Students completing the Dissertation module with no contact with the supervisors. It is recommended that all dissertation students should meet with supervisors during the dissertation module. It was felt this would have the dual action of supporting some struggling students and make it difficult for students just to produce a dissertation at the deadline, without the supervisor having seen it be developed over the period of the module.

- b. There have been a number of suspected Assessment Irregularity cases in 2022/23 involving reports of improper use of Artificial Intelligence (AI), which Academic Units, Student Progress Service and Student Disciplinary Committees have struggled to investigate and provide evidence for. As there is a commitment to maintaining good academic conduct, Student Progress included guidance for school colleagues at its annual student procedure update meeting in September 2023, to advise and support colleagues on the identification of academic misconduct using AI and guidance for interviewing students at Level 1.

3. Source of Learning: Student Disciplinary – behavioural misconduct

A student Reporter appealed against the outcome of a Student Disciplinary Committee, which found there was insufficient evidence for a finding of sexual misconduct. The initial report stated that the Responder had had non-consensual sex with the Reporter while the Reporter had been heavily intoxicated. Witness statements provided by the Reporter, and the Responder's own account, confirmed that the Reporter was unlikely to have had the capacity to provide consent due to the level of intoxication. However, during the hearing, the committee relied heavily on the Responder's account of the events and understanding of consent, without asking for clarification on discrepancies from the Reporter. The Appeal was admitted and a fresh Student Disciplinary Committee was appointed to reconsider the case. At the Appeal Student Disciplinary Committee, the panel found that misconduct was likely to have occurred and imposed a sanction of 'deferred expulsion' on the Responder. As a result of this appeal, all Disciplinary Panel members have undergone additional training on investigative interviewing.

4. Source of Learning: Complaints

- a. A PGT student submitted a formal complaint about a University employee. On receipt of the complaint, SPS held a case conference with People Services and determined that the case would be better investigated under the colleague disciplinary processes initially and would then be passed back to SPS to conclude the student complaints process. However, the complainant became confused by the different processes and what they could or could not be told with regards to the outcome of the investigation.

The University is requested to review how colleague disciplinary processes and student complaints processes intersect, since each operates within different frameworks which are not always compatible with one another (for example, the University is expected to provide clear outcomes to students regarding actions that have been taken as a result of their complaints, whereas People Services are limited as to the details that can be shared with students, due to employment law).

- b. A PGR student complaint reported unclear and incorrect Tuition Fees for the PhD Programme following their transfer from MPhil to PhD. The letter from the Graduate School confirming the transfer from MPhil to the PhD did not explicitly state the amount of tuition fees that would be payable following the transfer.

The recommendations resulting from the complaint outcome are;

- i. **Graduate Schools to review the letter confirming the transfer to include information on tuition fees for the remaining period of minimum candidature.**
 - ii. **It is also recommended that when an International PGR student transfer from PhD to MPhil or MPhil to PhD that they contact the Visa Support Team to seek guidance on any visa requirements, particularly whether they need to return home to make their new visa application.**
- c. A PGR student raised a complaint in relation to their experience of the University's management of their application to continue their research programme, which did not explicitly state the period of study considered by Newcastle University in reaching a decision on the previous study application. The complaint outcome letter recommended that:
Recommendations resulting from the complaint are:
 - i. **Graduate Schools to review the 'Previous Study' application guidance and outcome letter to provide a student with greater clarity on the amount of time being considered, clear definitions of the terms used within the letter, as well as containing information on tuition fees.**
 - ii. **Postgraduate Admissions to review the information contained in the postgraduate research offer letters, including the Certificate of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) and the Confirmation of Place (CoP) letters to ensure they are clear about periods of study and provide clear definitions of terms such as minimum and maximum candidature.**

5. Source of Learning: Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA)

The University adheres to the guidelines provided in the OIA Good Practice Framework chapters for its student procedures. Where the University has investigated a student case and confirms that the procedures for consideration within the University have been exhausted, a 'Completion of Procedures Letter' is written and sent to the student to indicate that they can take their concerns to the OIA if they **are dissatisfied** with the actions or outcome reached by the University. The following student cases have **resulted in** recommendations, from the OIA, for the University to consider:

- a. The OIA considered a complaint from a student where their Level 2 appeal had been admitted by an Appeal Adjudicator and returned to the School Board of Examiners (BoE) for reconsideration, but the school decided not to change the outcome. The OIA accepted that the BoE made an academic judgement based on the student's results in the examination that he had not met the requirements to progress to the next stage. The OIA noted that the School arranged an extraordinary meeting of both the PEC Committee and BoE to reconsider the case and that the PEC Committee did not support the student case, which meant the BoE did not change their decision. However, the OIA were critical of the University for not requiring an independent Chair be in place for the reconsideration, stating *"We think that the Chair being involved previously gives the appearance of bias. We think that under these circumstances it would have been good practice for the appeal adjudicator to recommend the appointment of an independent Chair of the Board of Examiners."*

The OIA recommended that the University ensure that perception of bias is avoided, stating that an independent Chair is appointed to consider the student's case afresh at the School stage, when the Chair has been involved in the student's appeal at an earlier stage of the process, requesting that the wording of the procedure is clear and applied consistently.

- b. The OIA considered a complaint from a student where they had asked for access to learning materials and details on programme content and timetable, as referred in their SSP. The student explained that their ADHD meant they needed clear instructions and longer to process information, to assist them to better organise and manage their learning. The student complained that the University had failed to provide this information and had disregarded duties required towards them under the Equality Act 2010. During the complaint investigation the school had responded that tutors were asked to upload resources in advance of sessions, where possible, although there were certain instances where this was not possible or appropriate. The OIA found that there was no evidence that the University reviewed the SSP or reasonable adjustments during the student's second or third years on the programme. The OIA concluded that the complaint was Partly Justified because the University complaints process did not fully consider the concerns he had raised about the quality of provision or the support he had received as a result of his disability and therefore, determined the University had not demonstrated that it properly considered its duties under the Equality Act 2010.

The OIA highlighted that their *Good Practice Framework: Supporting Disabled Students* advises and recommended that it is good practice to keep reasonable adjustments under review and to act when a student reports any problems or shortfall in support.

Angela McNeill, Director of the Student Progress Service, January 2024