



The
University
Of
Sheffield.

University
Secretary's
Office.

The Council, 26 April 2021

Report of the Senate

Date: 17 March 2021
Chair: The President & Vice-Chancellor (P&VC)
Secretary: Dr T Strike

FOR DECISION

1. Proposed Semester Dates

- 1.1 The General Regulations state the dates of semesters will be fixed by the Council on the recommendation of the Senate. Senate appointed a Task and Finish group and requested a consultation on the semester dates from 2024/25, for report back to Senate prior to making a recommendation to Council for agreement. Senate received the Report of the Senate Task and Finish Group: Semester Dates and approved the current structure of the academic year be adopted for the academic years 2024/25 to 2027/28, noting that there will be no misalignment between the respective Easter vacations of the University and Sheffield schools across this period. Senate approved that a Task and Finish Group becomes a standard part of Senate proposing future semester dates to Council. The proposed Semester Dates are attached as Appendix A, as recommended by the Senate for Council approval.

FOR INFORMATION

2. President & Vice-Chancellor's report

- 2.1 The President & Vice-Chancellor (P&VC) presented the report, including:
- (a) UK-EU Free Trade Agreement: The UK would contribute towards the Horizon Europe budget in order to secure its participation, however it was not clear whether this would be funded from a new funding stream or from existing budgets. The UK will no longer participate in the Erasmus+ scheme and has set up a national alternative, named the Turing Scheme. The University intended to submit a bid to the scheme.
 - (b) Independent Review of the TEF: The Independent Review of the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) had been published alongside the Government's response to the Review. Headlines included that there would not be a subject-level TEF; it was expected that the TEF would take place every four or

five years; there would be four TEF ratings overall, rather than the existing Gold, Silver and Bronze categories; and student satisfaction was unlikely to be included in the basket of performance measures.

- (c) Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom: A new free speech condition of registration would be placed on higher education institutions. There was an existing duty placed on Council as the governing body to protect both academic freedom and freedom of speech. Senate was invited under items 11 and 12 to consider additions to the terms of the Senate Learning and Teaching Committee and the Senate Research and Innovation Committee to make explicit the existing duty.
- (d) Admissions: Senate was updated on the admissions position for home and overseas admissions for UG, PGT and PGR.

2.2 Clarification was provided during discussion that the University was operating on the principle that where a student could not use their accommodation due to government restrictions then the University would not charge rent. The scope of the Data Warehouse project was also clarified.

3. Covid-19 – Learning and Teaching

3.1 Senate received a verbal update from the interim Vice-President for Education and reviewed arrangements in the second Semester to maintain teaching quality and standards, support students, meet learning objectives and enable adequate exams and assessments. During detailed discussion the following issues were covered: face-to-face teaching; examination resits; the start date of PGT courses in 2021/22; communications with students; and the Safety Net Policy.

4. Report of the Council

(Meetings held on 14 December 2020 & 8 February 2021)

- 4.1 Senate received and noted the Report. Responses to questions submitted in advance of the meeting relating to the Council discussion of, and decision to adopt, the IHRA definition of antisemitism were provided. Attention was drawn to Council's public interest governance duty to ensure academic staff have freedom within the law to question and test received wisdom, and to put forwards new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions. Council's invitation to Senate to add to the Terms of Reference of the Learning & Teaching and the Research and Innovation Committees to make explicit the protection of academic freedom was highlighted. It was outlined that the effectiveness of this approach could be evaluated after the measure was put in place. A wider piece of work initiated by the Council Equality Diversity & Inclusion Committee (EDIC) to develop a Religion & Belief Equality strategy and action plan was also highlighted.
- 4.2 During discussion, it was confirmed that the Senate Learning & Teaching and Research & Innovation Committees were provided with the support deemed necessary by the Chairs of those Committees to conduct the Committee's business, including for example the provision of legal advice if required.

5. Reports of committees

5.1 Committees of Senate

5.1.1 Senate approved the reports of the following committees:

- (a) Report of the Research Ethics Committee
(Meeting held on 10 February 2021)

Senate received and approved the Report, including the annual report of ethics breaches of ethics approval requirements, and other ethics concerns, for the period September 2019-August 2020; potential breaches of the Ethics Policy; and a complaint case.

(b) Report of the Senate Academic Assurance Committee

(Meeting held on 2 March 2021)

- (i) Senate approved changes in a membership category.

Senate's attention was drawn to the Committee's current level of assurance regarding grade inflation and regarding student employment outcomes.

(c) Report of the Senate Learning and Teaching Committee

(Meeting held on 9 February 2021)

- (i) Senate approved an additional term of reference for the Senate Learning and Teaching Committee: "To ensure staff supporting and delivering our programmes have freedom within the law to question and test received wisdom and to put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions."

- (ii) Senate approved a change to the General Regulations to be enacted in 2020/21 to allow all exam boards to recommend undergraduate exit awards in exceptional circumstances.

- (iii) Senate approved a change to the General Regulations to be enacted alongside the implementation of the new student record system SITS in 2022/23 for the systematic introduction of Undergraduate Exit Awards, subject to confirmation that the credit thresholds were the same for 3- and 4-year degree courses.

- (iv) Senate approved an institutional policy on moderation of assessed work.

- (v) Senate approved an institutional policy on scaling, subject to the provision of worked examples in guidance that would sit alongside the policy.

- (vi) Senate approved a revised Teaching Awards Scheme for 2020-2021.

- (vii) Senate approved new, significantly amended, discontinued and suspended programmes approved by Faculties for the period 3 October 2020 – 18 January 2021.

During discussion, it was clarified that an exit award was awarded at the discretion of an Exam Board, rather than an individual student applying for it. Further clarification on exceptional circumstances would be provided to the Students' Union. Providing some worked examples to accompany the scaling policy would help ensure that there was clarity across the institution. It was agreed to have a further discussion on calibration at a future Senate.

(d) Report of the Senate Research and Innovation Committee

(Meeting held on 3 February 2021)

- (i) Senate approved an additional term of reference for the Senate Research and Innovation Committee: "To ensure researchers have freedom within the law to question and test received wisdom and to put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions."

- (ii) Senate approved an amendment to Regulation XIV: General University Regulations to enable research students to have dual registration for the purpose of a jointly delivered, single collaborative programme.

- (iii) Senate approved amendments to Regulation XVI: General Regulations for Higher Degrees, Postgraduate Diplomas and Postgraduate Certificates:
 - (a) The replacement of the section titled “Regulations for the Degree of PhD in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities” with a new set of “Regulations for the Degree of PhD by Practice” which can be offered by any Faculty.
 - (b) Amendments to the section titled “Regulations for the Degree of PhD by Publication in all Faculties”.
 - (c) Amendments to the section titled “Regulations for the Degree of MD by Publication in all Faculties”.
- (iv) Senate approved adoption of the Preventing Harm in Research and Innovation (Safeguarding) Policy.
- (v) Senate approved publication of the University Statement on Open Research.

Senate was updated on research funding and specifically to reductions in Official Development Assistance funding, and on the University’s REF submission. Senate agreed to receive a presentation on the REF submission and any lessons learnt at its next meeting in June.

6. Student Formal Procedure Cases: Report to Senate 2019-20

- 6.1 Senate received and noted the report, which summarised Student Formal Procedure Casework in the previous academic session (2019-20), for information. It reports on the volume and nature of activity in each area (Appeals, Complaints, Discipline, Fitness to Practise, Progress, and external review by the OIA). The report is provided as Appendix B for Council to note.

The University of Sheffield

Dates of Semesters 2024-25 to 2027-2028

Session 2024-2025

Autumn Semester 30 September 2024 to 21 December 2024
20 January 2025 to 8 February 2025

Spring Semester 10 February 2025 to 5 April 2025
28 April 2025 to 14 June 2025

Session 2025-2026

Autumn Semester 29 September 2025 to 20 December 2025
19 January 2026 to 7 February 2026

Spring Semester 9 February 2026 to 28 March 2026
20 April 2026 to 13 June 2026

Session 2026-2027

Autumn Semester 28 September 2026 to 19 December 2026
18 January 2027 to 6 February 2027

Spring Semester 8 February 2027 to 20 March 2027
12 April 2027 to 12 June 2027

Session 2027-2028

Autumn Semester 27 September 2027 to 18 December 2027
17 January 2028 to 5 February 2028

Spring Semester 7 February 2028 to 1 April 2028
24 April 2028 to 10 June 2028



Student Administration Service.

2019-20 Student Formal Procedures Cases: Report to Senate

1. Purpose

This report summarises Student Formal Procedure Casework in the previous academic session (2019-20). It reports on the volume of activity in each area (Appeals, Complaints, Discipline, Fitness to Practise, and Progress, as well as external review by the OIA), and is presented in a new format to better highlight trends. Departments/faculties who wish to discuss/explore further their data are invited to get in touch with Helen Tattam, Student Information and Developments Manager in the Student Administration Service (h.l.tattam@sheffield.ac.uk).

Note that the annual reporting period is from 1 October to 30 September.

2. Introduction

The table below shows that student casework continues to grow in volume and complexity. There have been sharp rises in cases in the areas of complaints, OIA cases, and case reviews, and academic appeals also continue to rise. Overall, there has been a 39% increase in casework (relating to Student Formal Procedures) in the past 4 years (from 628 in 2016-17 to 872 in 2019-20). This rise continues a trend which began in 2012-13; the rise in casework since that year is of the order of 204% (287 cases in 2012-13).

Session	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Complaints	27	49	35	171
Academic Appeals	274	308	358	385
Case Reviews Requests	57	56	51	101
Progress	180	206	243	148
Fitness to Practise	4	2	5	4
Discipline	69	66	65	48
External Review (OIA)	17	16	14	36
Total	628	703	771	872

3. Headline Figures and Trends

3.1 Admissions Complaints & Appeals

Applicants may appeal against the outcome of an admissions decision if they feel that the University did not consider their application in accordance with the Student Admissions Policy (and/or other published procedures), or if they feel that information provided in their application was not taken fully into account. They may also submit a complaint to express dissatisfaction about the University and/or departmental admissions policies and procedures that have been used to reach a selection decision, or about the actions/lack of action taken by the University or its staff. Appeals and complaints may either be upheld or rejected, unless they are withdrawn or not progressed for other reasons. Students may request a Case Review if they are dissatisfied with the outcome of their appeal or complaint. At the end of the reporting period, cases may still be ongoing.

These processes are managed by the Admissions Service and relate to complaints from applicants/offer-holders. These figures have been included to provide a more complete picture of complaint and appeals procedures at The University.

3.1.1 Admissions Appeals

Session	2017-18				2018-19				2019-20			
	UG	PGT	PGR	TOTAL	UG	PGT	PGR	TOTAL	UG	PGT	PGR	TOTAL
Upheld	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	2	0	0	2
Rejected	2	3	0	5	4	1	0	5	6	6	1	13
Withdrawn	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Not Progressed	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Awaiting Outcome	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	2	3	0	5	4	3	0	7	8	6	1	15

3.1.2 Admissions Complaints

Session	2017-18				2018-19				2019-20			
	UG	PGT	PGR	TOTAL	UG	PGT	PGR	TOTAL	UG	PGT	PGR	TOTAL
Upheld	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Rejected	1	2	1	4	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
Withdrawn	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Not Progressed	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Awaiting Outcome	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	3	2	1	6	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2

3.2 Formal Student Complaints (Faculty Level)

Academic appeals and complaints are student-initiated procedures. Faculty decisions will either uphold or reject the appeal/complaint, or, in the case of some academic appeals relating to departmental penalties for the use of unfair means, may be referred to the Senate Discipline Panel (formerly the Discipline Committee). Occasionally, a case may be withdrawn for specific reasons, or a student will withdraw from the University before a case is completed. A number of cases will still be ongoing at the end of the reporting period.

Cases are not progressed if they do not meet the criteria for a complaint or the case is not sufficiently coherent.

Session	2017-18				2018-19				2019-20			
	UG	PGT	PGR	TOTAL	UG	PGT	PGR	TOTAL	UG	PGT	PGR	TOTAL
Upheld	3	2	3	8	2	1	1	4	5	0	0	5
Rejected (Not Upheld)	20	3	8	31	10	3	2	15	13	129*	6	148
Withdrawn	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Not Progressed	5	3	2	10	9	4	3	16	6	10	1	17
Awaiting Outcome	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
TOTAL	28	8	13	49	21	8	6	35	25	139	7	171

*This figure includes two group complaints of 49 and 51 students respectively. In both cases, the main focus of these group complaints was industrial action in the first half of 2020.

Session	2017-18				2018-19				2019-20			
	UG	PGT	PGR	TOTAL	UG	PGT	PGR	TOTAL	UG	PGT	PGR	TOTAL
Home/EU	21	6	9	36	20	3	2	25	22	33	1	56
Overseas	7	2	4	13	1	5	4	10	3	106	6	115
TOTAL	28	8	13	49	21	8	6	35	25	139	7	171

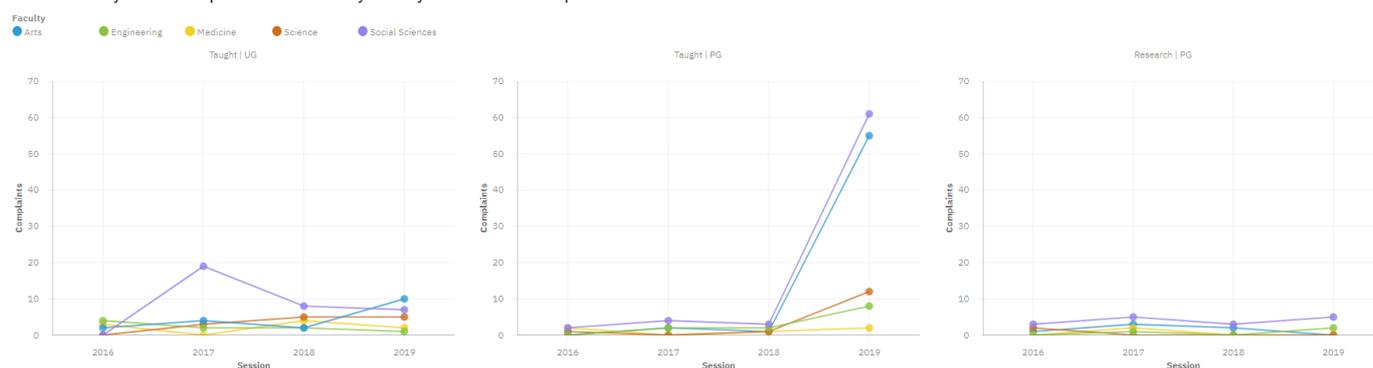
The number of complaints in 2019-20 increased dramatically compared with the previous session, owing to two large group complaints (comprising 49 and 51 students each) and a doubling of single student complaints (up from 35 to 71) bringing the total number of complaints in the past session to 171. The volume of cases in 2019-20 can largely be attributed to industrial action-related complaints, with the two faculties most affected being Arts & Humanities and Social Sciences. 130 of the cases cite industrial action as a ground for the complaint.

Proportionately, fewer cases were upheld (3% compared with 11% in the previous academic session). 10% were not progressed (46% in 2018/19).

In terms of student type, this varies significantly year on year. In 2016-17, the bulk of the complaints were from postgraduate students. In 2017-18, undergraduate students formed the bulk of the complaints submitted (56%) and in 2018-19, 60% of complaints were from undergraduates.

In 2019-20, 81% of cases were again from PGT students. The bulk of undergraduate complaints came from Home students (88% in 2019-20; 95% in 2018-19; 75% in 2017-18).

Formal Faculty-Level Complaint Case Totals by Faculty and Student Group



3.2.1 Complaints Progressing to Case Review and OIA

Students may request a Case Review if they are dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint, and if they are subsequently dissatisfied with the outcome of the Case Review, they may submit a complaint to the Office of the Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) for an independent and external review.

This table reports the number of cases where a student requested a Case Review, and the number of cases that subsequently went to the OIA. As students have 12 months in which they may submit a complaint to the OIA, the OIA review often takes place in the following academic session, so the data relating to the most recent session (in this case 2019-20) may be subject to change.

Session Formal Complaint Received	Total Formal Complaints in Session	Formal Complaint -> Case Review		Case Review -> OIA	
		Number Escalated	% Escalated (1.d.p)	Number Escalated	% Escalated (1.d.p)
2017-18	50	10	20.0	4	40.0
2018-19	35	5	14.3	2	40.0
2019-20	171	34	19.8	15*	44.1

*As at 8 February 2021. Students have up to 12 months from the date of the completion of university procedures to take their case to the OIA. Students may escalate a case regardless of whether the University has upheld, upheld in part or not upheld their complaint.

3.3 Academic Appeals

Academic appeals may be submitted on the grounds of i. procedural error, ii. new evidence concerning extenuating circumstances which could not have made available at an earlier stage, or iii. a failure of supervision. Students may also appeal a departmental action taken in respect of unfair means.

Session	2017-18				2018-19				2019-20			
	UG	PGT	PGR	TOTAL	UG	PGT	PGR	TOTAL	UG	PGT	PGR	TOTAL
Upheld	67	17	5	89	64	27	3	91	47	38	3	88
Rejected (Not Upheld)	88	40	7	135	86	82	2	169	103	65	6	174
Withdrawn	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Not Progressed	56	25	2	83	35	55	2	91	51	66	3	120
Referred to Discipline	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	3	0	3
Awaiting Outcome	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	6	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	212	82	14	308	187	164	7	358	201	172	12	385

Session	2017-18				2018-19				2019-20			
	UG	PGT	PGR	TOTAL	UG	PGT	PGR	TOTAL	UG	PGT	PG R	TOTAL
Home/EU	172	34	8	214	137	40	0	177	146	38	6	190
Overseas	40	48	6	94	50	124	7	181	55	134	6	195
TOTAL	212	82	14	308	187	164	7	358	201	172	12	385

The number of academic appeals has increased steadily in recent years, with a further 7.5% increase in 2019-20. For broader context, the number of academic appeals has grown by 187% since 2012-13 (134 appeals in 2012-13 growing to 385 in 2019-20).

Extenuating Circumstances (ECs) remain the most common ground for appeal (64% of all appeals cited ECs as grounds in 2019-20; 69% in 2018-19; 65% in 2017-18), followed by procedural error and failure of supervision.

At undergraduate level, academic appeals are mostly from Home students, a picture which has remained consistent over the past 3 years (73% in 2019-20 and 2018-19; 80% in 2017-18). At postgraduate level, 78% of PGT appeals were from overseas students (76% in 2018-19, 58% in 2017-18); at PGR level, it was a 50/50 split.

It is worth noting that 31% of appeals were incomplete and therefore not progressed (up from 25% in 2018-19), and students often need support with presenting their case (i.e. making clear the grounds for appeal).

3.3.1 Academic Appeals Progressing to Case Review Stage and the OIA

Students may request a Case Review if they are dissatisfied with the outcome of their appeal, and, if they are subsequently dissatisfied with the outcome of the Case Review, they may submit a complaint to the Office of the Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) for an independent and external review.

This table reports the number of cases where a student requested a Case Review, and the number of cases that subsequently went to the OIA (External Review). The OIA review often takes place in the following session, so the data relating to the most recent session (in this case 2019-20) may be subject to change.

	Total Faculty-Level Academic Appeals in Session	Faculty-Level Academic Appeals -> Case Review		Case Review -> OIA	
Session Faculty-Level Academic Appeal Received		Number Escalated	% Escalated (1.d.p)	Number Escalated	% Escalated (1.d.p)
2017-18	308	43	14.0	11	25.6
2018-19	358	62	17.3	13	21.0
2019-20	385	55	14.3	3*	5.5*

*As at 8 February 2021. Students have up to 12 months from the date of the completion of university procedures to take their case to the OIA. Students may escalate a case regardless of whether the University has upheld or rejected (not upheld) their appeal.

3.4 Case Reviews

Students may request a Case Review if they are dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint or academic appeal, regardless of whether the complaint or appeal has been Upheld or Rejected (Not Upheld). The Case Review is the final stage of the University's Complaints and Academic Appeals Procedures and requests are considered by the Vice-Presidents for Education and Research or their nominee.

Case Reviews may be submitted on one or more of the following grounds: i. procedural error; ii. new evidence which was not available at the previous stage; and, iii. manifestly unreasonable decision.

Session	2017-18				2018-19				2019-20			
	UG	PGT	PGR	TOTAL	UG	PGT	PGR	TOTAL	UG	PGT	PGR	TOTAL
Upheld	4	2	1	7	4	3	0	7	2	6	1	9
Rejected/Ineligible	1	1	0	2	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Referred to another University procedure	2	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	3
Referred to Case Review Panel	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Early Resolution	3	1	1	5	2	0	0	2	1	2	1	4
Insufficient Grounds for Further Action (Not Upheld)	19	11	7	38*	14	23	2	39	25	52*	6	83
Awaiting Outcome	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	1	1	0	2
TOTAL	29	16	10	56*	21	28	2	51	29	64	8	101

*Includes an Admissions Case Review, which cannot be categorised under any of the registered student types below.

** Includes a group case review request of 22 students, arising from one of the two group complaints noted in 3.2 above.

Session	2017-18				2018-19				2019-20			
	UG	PGT	PGR	TOTAL	UG	PGT	PGR	TOTAL	UG	PGT	PGR	TOTAL
Home/EU	20	8	6	34	19	7	0	26	23	17	3	43
Overseas	9	8	4	21	2	21	2	25	6	47	5	58
TOTAL	29	16	10	55	21	28	2	51	29	64	8	101

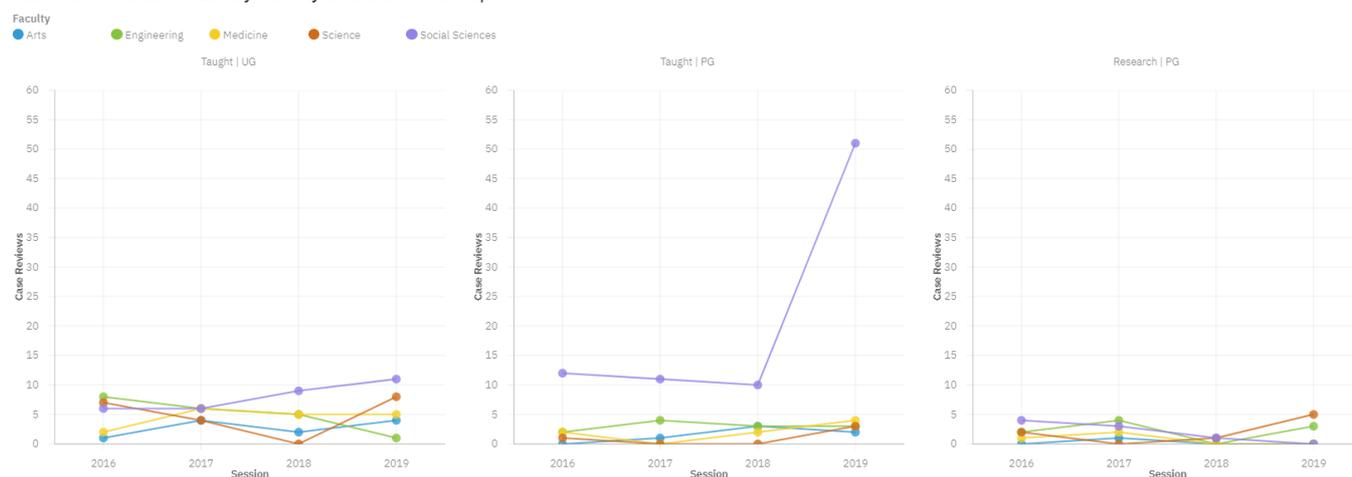
The number of case reviews has increased by 98% between the 2018-19 and 2019-20 session, though it remains the case that a significant proportion of requests for case review are found to have insufficient grounds for further action (i.e. not upheld); the proportion of cases upheld has not increased significantly.

We saw a marked increase in the number of Case Review Requests (CRRs) from Postgraduate Taught Students, up from 28 in 2018-19 to 64 in 2019-20. One of the two group complaints took the case to Case Review stage (accounting for 22 students), which contributed to, but is not solely responsible for, the increase in the number of Case Reviews from Postgraduate Taught Students in 2019-20.

The majority of case reviews from undergraduate students were from Home students (79% in 2019-20, 90% in 2018-19, 69% in 2017-18). At postgraduate level, the converse was true, with 74% of CRRs being from Overseas students.

The most often cited ground for Case Review was the decision being “manifestly unreasonable” followed by “new evidence”, and lastly “procedural error”.

Case Review Case Totals by Faculty and Student Group



3.5 Progress

Student Progress is a University-initiated procedure. A student for whom a department has progress concerns may be referred to the Faculty under the University’s Progress Concern Procedure, with a view to the case being dealt with either directly by the Faculty Officer (progress concerns) or by a Faculty Student Review Committee (FSRC). FSRC decisions will either exclude the student from further study or permit the student to continue their studies (with or without conditions). A number of cases will still be ongoing at the end of the reporting period.

In 2018-19, the Unsatisfactory Progress procedure was renamed Student Progress Concerns in response to departmental feedback; Progress Concerns was felt to better reflect the shift in focus from strict academic engagement and progress monitoring to a more holistic and supportive approach to progress and engagement issues. The volume of Progress Concerns had been steadily increasing since, although the 18% increase in Progress Concerns cases in 2018-19 most likely reflected this change in focus and the earlier identification of concerns.

In 2019-20, and in direct relation to the pandemic, we saw a significant drop in Progress Concerns referrals from departments. This is most likely due to a necessary re-focus of departmental activity at what would have been the peak referral time (March/April) last year.

Session	2017-18			2018-19			2019-20		
	UG	PGT	TOTAL	UG	PGT	TOTAL	UG	PGT	TOTAL
Warning Letter	86	4	90	105	4	109	77	2	79
Interview	80	2	82	81	4	85	20	2	22
Referred to FSRC ¹	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Withdrawn	25	3	28	27	8	35	23	6	29*
Not Progressed	6	0	6	11	3	14	15	1	16
Awaiting Outcome	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
TOTAL	197	9	206	224	19	243	137	11	148

- Please note that direct referrals to Faculty Student Review Committee occur mainly in respect of programmes with professional accreditation. Direct referral to FSRC is also an avenue in respect of progress concerns cases but is very rarely invoked.

*17 students re-engaged after being sent a deemed withdrawn letter (12 UG, 5 PGT).

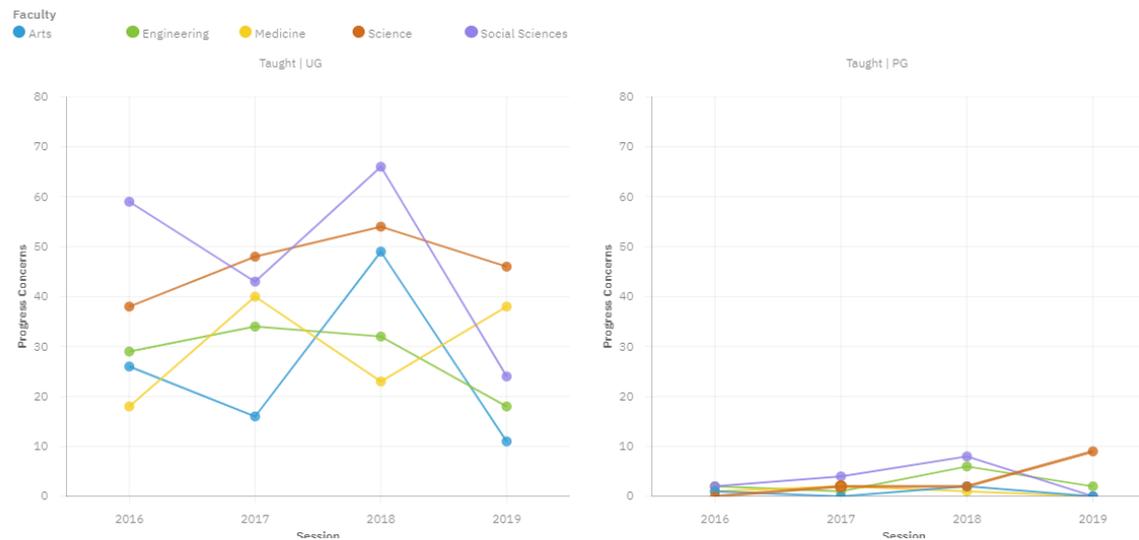
Progress concern cases arise mostly in relation to Home students; the University's Interim Student Attendance Policy facilitates the earlier identification of non-engagement and progress issues in the overseas student body, thereby preventing more students from being referred under Progress.

	2017-18		2018-19		2019-20	
	Home	Overseas	Home	Overseas	Home	Overseas
Letters	71	19	90	19	68	11
Interviews	66	16	75	10	21	1
Withdrawn	20	8	20	15	22*	7**
Total	157	43	185	44	111	19

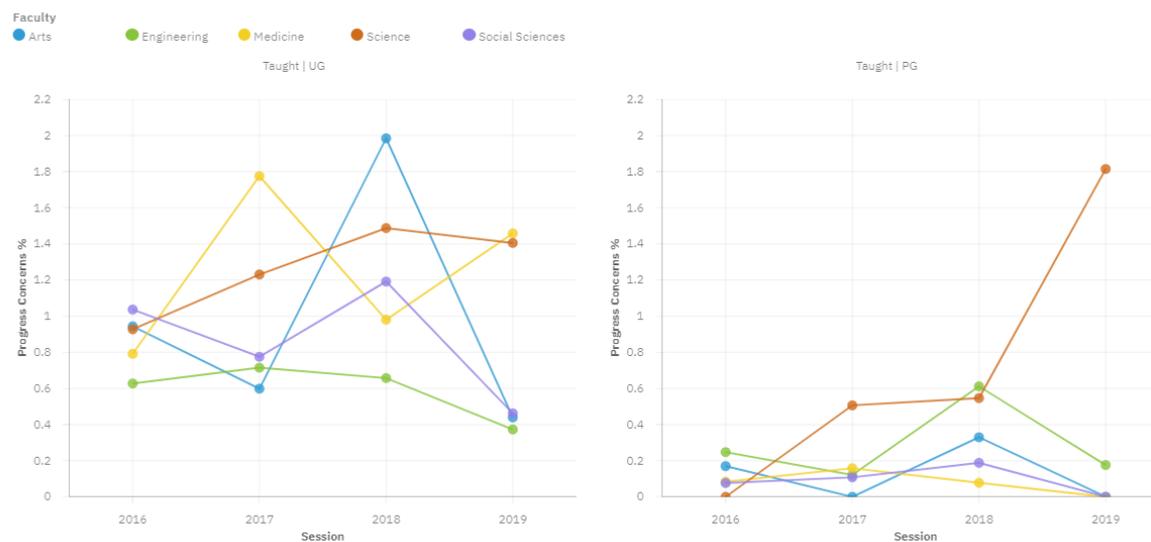
*11 students re-engaged after being sent a deemed withdrawn letter.

**6 students re-engaged after being sent a deemed withdrawn letter.

Progress Concern Case Totals by Faculty and Student Group



Percentage of Student Population with Progress Concern Cases

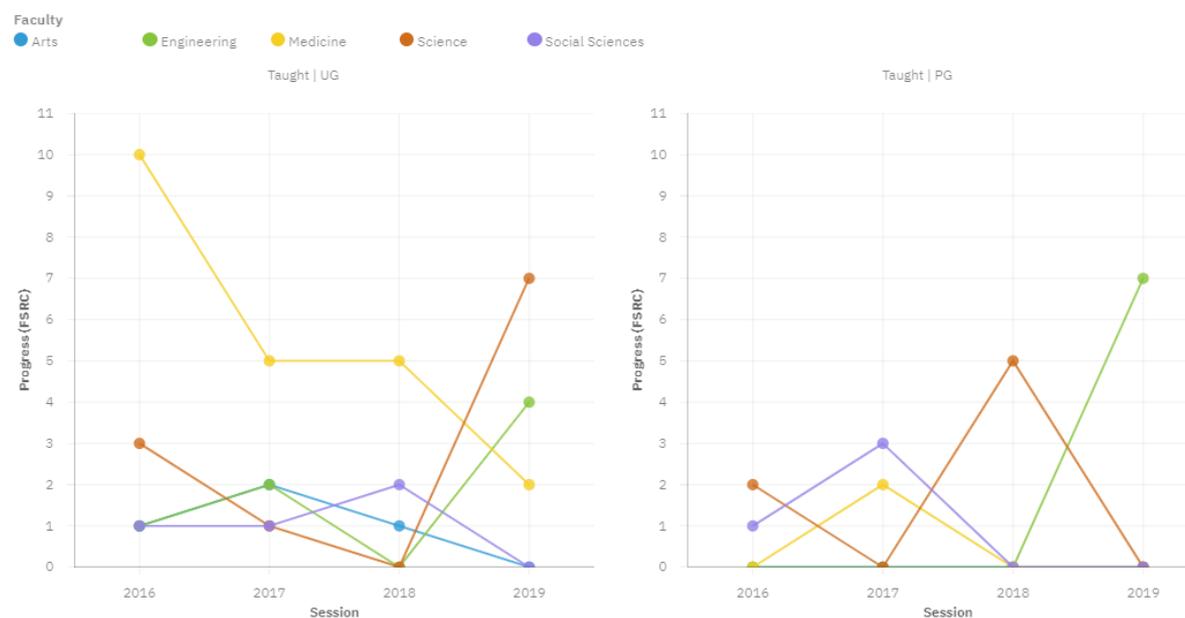


3.5.1 Faculty Student Review Committee (FSRC)

In 2019-20, 11 cases were referred to FSRC leading to 2 students being excluded and 4 students withdrawing (a total of 54% of FSRC referrals), compared with 23% in 2018-19 and 44% in 17-18.

Session	2017-18			2018-19			2019-20		
	UG	PGT	TOTAL	UG	PGT	TOTAL	UG	PGT	TOTAL
Permitted to Continue	3	0	3	2	4	5	1	2	3
Excluded	3	2	5	2	1	2	1	1	2
Withdrawn	1	1	2	1	0	1	1	3	4
Not Progressed	4	2	6	3	0	3	1	1	2
Awaiting Outcome	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
TOTAL	11	5	16	8	5	13	4	7	11

FSRC Case Totals by Faculty and Student Group



3.6 Fitness to Practise

3.6.1 Faculty Fitness to Practise Committee

Student Fitness to Practise is also a University-initiated procedure. Students on specified professional programmes of study may be referred to the Faculty Fitness to Practise Committee (FFTPC), who can either exclude the student from further study or permit the student to continue. Occasionally, a case may not be progressed for specific reasons, or a student will withdraw from the University before a case is completed. A number of cases will still be ongoing at the end of the reporting period.

Student cases which are presented to FFTPC are few but complex cases, and carry potentially significant outcomes for students whose planned career may be seriously jeopardised if not altogether ended. A student may be referred to FFTPC upon the initial investigation concluding that the concerns are substantial enough to warrant review by a Committee. In 2019-20, of the 4 cases referred to FFTPC, none have been excluded so far (an outcome is still awaited in respect of one case) and 2 were permitted to continue. In 2019-20, the cases involved students from the Faculties of Medicine, Dentistry & Health, and Social Sciences.

Session	2017-18			2018-19			2019-20		
	UG	PGT	TOTAL	UG	PGT	TOTAL	UG	PGT	TOTAL
Permitted to Continue	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	2
Excluded	0	0	0	4	0	4	0	0	0
Withdrawn	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Not Progressed	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1
Awaiting Outcome	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
TOTAL	1	1	2	5	0	5	3	1	4

3.7 Senate Appeals Panel (arising from FSRC or FFTPC)

Students may appeal against a Faculty progress or fitness to practise outcome to the Senate Appeals Panel (formerly Appeals Committee of Senate). The Panel may either quash or uphold the original Faculty decision. Occasionally, a case may be dismissed or withdrawn for specific reasons, or a student will withdraw from the University before a case is completed. Some cases may still be ongoing at the end of the reporting period.

Session	2017-18				2018-19				2019-20			
	UG	PGT	PGR	TOTAL	UG	PGT	PGR	TOTAL	UG	PGT	PGR	TOTAL
Quashed Faculty Decision	1	0	0	1	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Upheld Faculty Decision	1	1	0	2	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	2
Dismissed/Withdrawn	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Awaiting Outcome	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1
TOTAL	2	1	0	3	3	0	0	3	1	2	0	3

3.7.1 Faculty Student Review Committee Appeals

This table reports the number of cases where a student's appeal against the decision of the FSRC is heard by the Senate Appeals Panel (formerly the Appeals Committee of Senate), and the number of cases that subsequently went to the OIA (External Review). As students have 12 months in which they may submit a complaint to the OIA, the OIA review often takes place in the following session, so the data relating to the most recent session (in this case 2019-20) may be subject to change.

Session FSRC Case Initiated	Total FSRC Cases in Session	FSRC -> Senate Appeals Panel		Senate Appeals Panel -> OIA	
		Number Escalated	% Escalated (1.d.p)	Number Escalated	% Escalated (1.d.p)
2017-18	17	1	5.9	0	0.0
2018-19	13	2	15.4	0	0.0
2019-20	11	1*	9.1*	0*	0.0*

*As at 8 February 2021.

3.7.2 Faculty Fitness to Practise Committee Appeals

This table reports the number of cases where a student's appeal against the decision of the FFTPC is heard by the Senate Appeals Panel (formerly the Appeals Committee of Senate), and the number of cases that subsequently went to the OIA (External Review). As students have 12 months in which they may submit a complaint to the OIA, the OIA

review often occurs in a later session, so the data relating to the most recent session (in this case 2019-20) is subject to change.

Session FFTPC Case Initiated	Total FFTPC Cases in Session	FFTPC -> Senate Appeals Panel		Senate Appeals Panel -> OIA	
		Number Escalated	% Escalated (1.d.p)	Number Escalated	% Escalated (1.d.p)
2017-18	2	0	0.0	0	0.0
2018-19	5	2	40.0	0	0.0
2019-20	4	1	25.0	0*	0.0*

*As at 8 February 2021.

3.8 Discipline

Students who are alleged to be in breach of the *General Regulations as to the Discipline of Students* may have their case considered via an Investigation (formerly the Administrative Procedure), a Summary Hearing, or a Senate Discipline Panel Hearing. The range of outcomes and penalties available are set out in the Discipline Regulations.

Session	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Total Investigation Cases	37	32	30
Senate Discipline Panel Cases			
At Preliminary Stages	0	0	0
Not Proven/Progressed	0	1	0
Referred back to Department	0	1	0
Withdrawn before hearing	3*	0	0
Summary Hearing	7	8	1
Full Hearing	19	23	17
Total Senate Discipline Panel Cases	29	33	18
OVERALL TOTAL	66	65	48
<i>Procedures not fully completed at year end (30 Sept)</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>5</i>

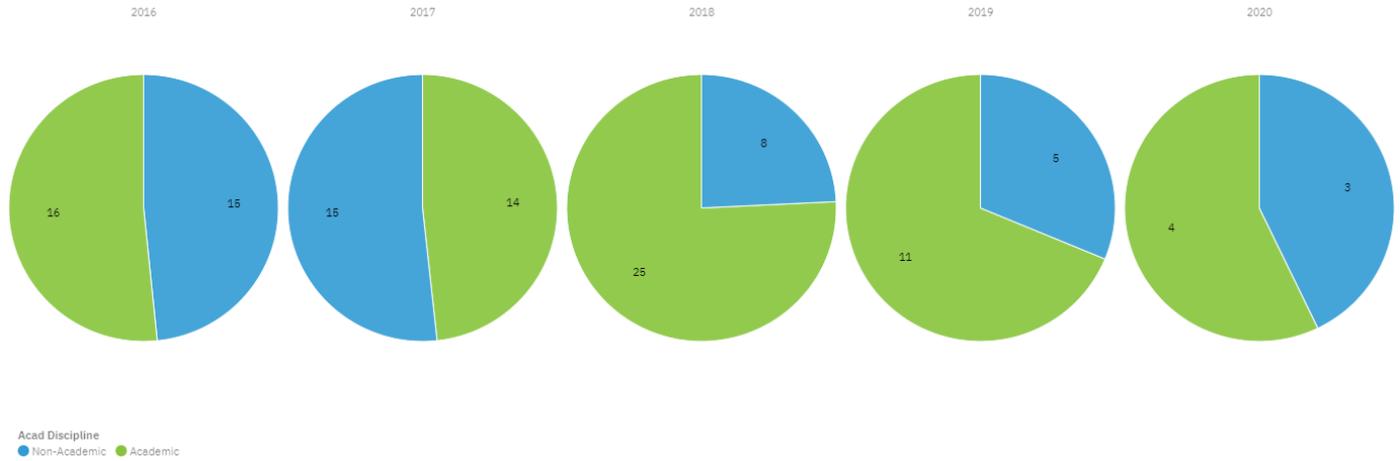
*All Senate Discipline Panel Hearings

In the 2019-20 session, there were 48 cases of misconduct referred under the Discipline Regulations/Procedure, a drop of 26% on 2018-19, which may be attributable to the impact of the pandemic.

3.8.1 Senate Discipline Panel Cases

The charts below report on the case which were referred to the Senate Discipline Panel. Please note that academic misconduct cases relate to the use of unfair means in the assessment process.

Academic/Non-Academic Split of Discipline Cases by Session (Senate Discipline Panel Only)



The above charts do not include Investigation cases (see table above).

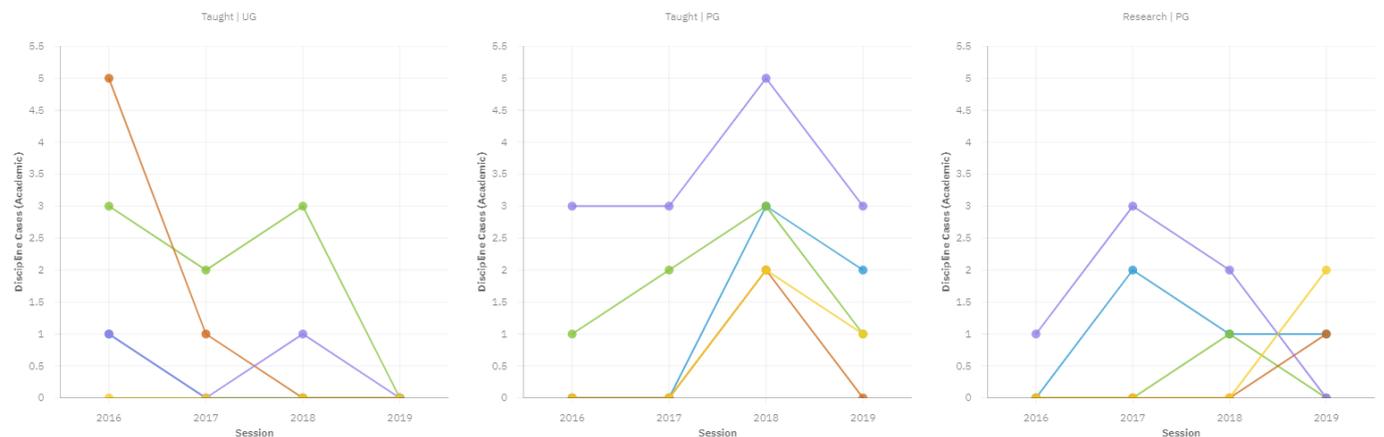
The 2019-20 session saw a sharp drop (45%) in the number of cases of academic misconduct going before the Senate Discipline Panel, down from 33 in 2018-19 to 18, in direct contrast to the sharp increase seen in 2018-19. 61% of cases related to academic misconduct, compared with 76% in 2018-19.

As indicated in the table below, a majority of academic misconduct cases continue to concern postgraduate students. Of the 11 cases in 2019-20, all were from PGT (7) or PGR (4) students. There were no undergraduate students referred for academic misconduct to the Senate Discipline Panel in 2019-20.

Session	2017-18				2018-19				2019-20			
Fee Status	UG	PGT	PGR	TOTAL	UG	PGT	PGR	TOTAL	UG	PGT	PGR	TOTAL
Home/EU	2	0	3	5	2	6	0	8	0	1	4	4
Overseas	1	6	2	9	3	10	4	17	0	6	0	7
TOTAL	3	6	5	14	5	16	4	25	0	7	4	11

Academic Discipline Case Totals by Faculty and Student Group

Faculty: Arts (blue), Engineering (green), Medicine (yellow), Science (orange), Social Sciences (purple)



3.8.2 Discipline Suspensions

Session	2017-18			2018-19			2019-20		
	New	Continuing	TOTAL	New	Continuing	TOTAL	New	Continuing	TOTAL
Number of Suspensions	7	4	11	1	2	3	1	3	4

Figures for continuing cases may refer to the same case in successive years, for example where a student is subject to a lengthy police investigation.

3.8.3 Senate Discipline Appeals Panel

This table reports the number of cases where a student appealed the decision of the Investigation, Summary Hearing or Senate Discipline Panel Hearing, and the number of cases that subsequently went to the OIA (External Review). As students have 12 months in which they may submit a complaint to the OIA, the OIA review often occurs in a later session, so the data relating to the most recent session (in this case 2018-19) is subject to change.

Session Discipline Panel Case Initiated	Total Senate Discipline Panel Cases in Session	Senate Discipline Panel Case -> Senate Discipline Appeals Panel		Senate Discipline Appeals Panel -> OIA	
		Number Escalated	% Escalated (1.d.p)	Number Escalated	% Escalated (1.d.p)
2017-18	29	1*	3.4	1	100.0
2018-19	33	6*	18.2	1	16.7
2019-20	18	5*	27.8	2**	40.0**

*In addition, the following number of Accommodation and Commercial Services Discipline cases were taken to a Senate Discipline Appeals Panel: 1 in 2017-18; 1 in 2018-19; 1 in 2019-20.

**As at 8 February 2021.

3.9 External Review (Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA))

The Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) for Higher Education is an external organisation which provides an independent scheme for the review of student complaints. All HEIs are required to participate in the scheme. Students who are not satisfied with the outcome of decisions made by the University in cases related to academic appeals, complaints, discipline, fitness to practise and progress, and who have completed the applicable internal University procedures, may have recourse to the OIA by submitting an OIA complaint.

The OIA may find the complaint justified (in whole or in part), not justified, not eligible under the scheme, or the OIA may settle the case in consultation with the provider without a formal review. The OIA may also decide to terminate a case. Full details of OIA Outcomes are provided in the OIA's [Rules](#). Students or former students have up to 12 months from the completion of internal university procedures in which to submit an OIA complaint. Some cases may still be ongoing at the end of the reporting period. Data in the tables below is for all Faculties.

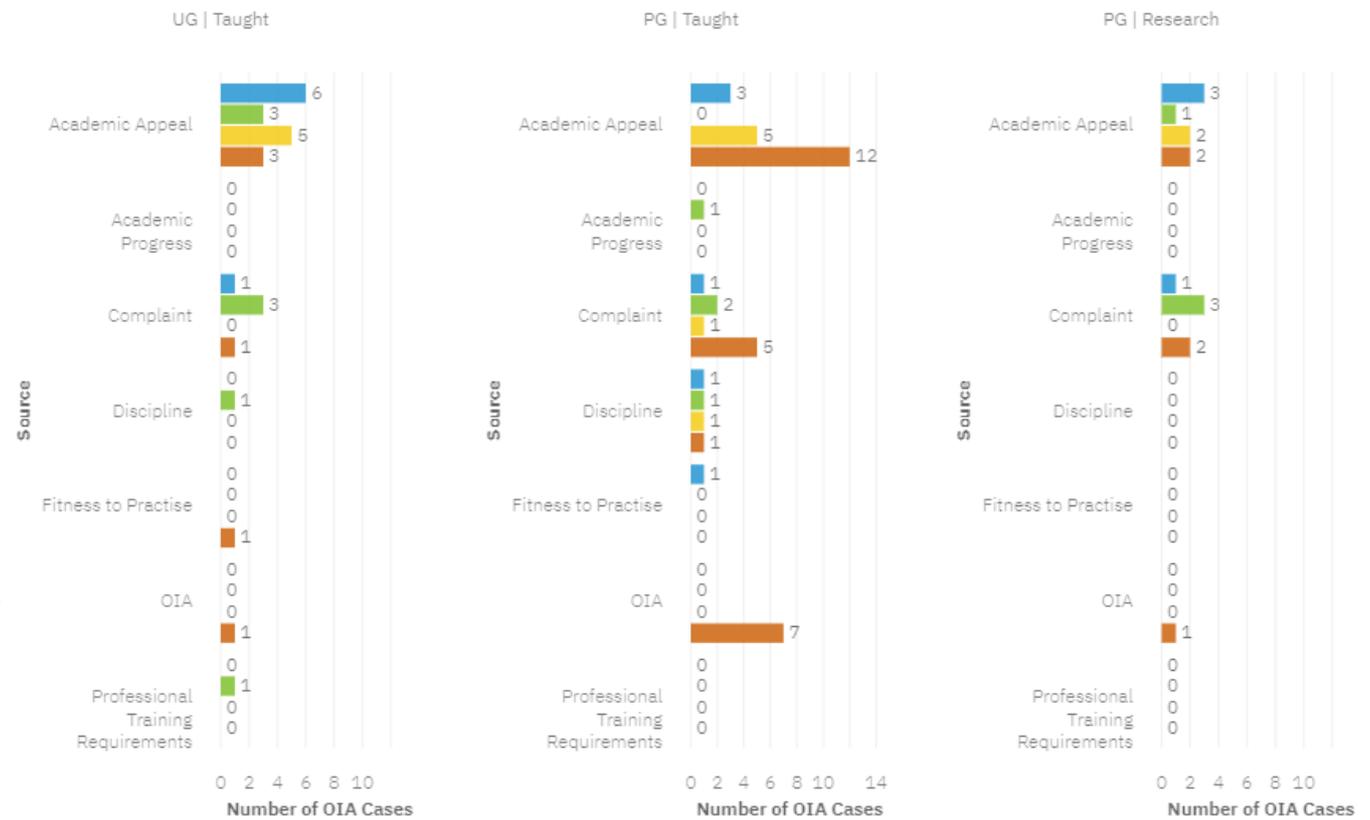
We saw a sharp increase in the number of complaints to the OIA during 2019-20. So far, of those 36 OIA complaints, only 1 has been found Partly Justified and 1 was Settled in consultation with the University. Of the remaining OIA complaints, 6 were deemed Not Eligible for consideration and 7 were withdrawn by the student, with the remainder all Not Justified (50% of all OIA complaints). We await the outcome for 3 OIA Complaints.

Session OIA Complaint Received	2017-18				2018-19				2019-20			
Outcome	UG	PGT	PGR	TOTAL	UG	PGT	PGR	TOTAL	UG	PGT	PGR	TOTAL
Justified	1	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Partly Justified	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	1
Not Justified	6	2	1	9	3	6	2	11	3	12	3	18
Not Eligible	1	1	2	4	0	0	0	0	0	5	1	6
Settled	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	2	1	0	0	1
Withdrawn/ Terminated	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	5	0	7
Awaiting Outcome	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	3
TOTAL	8	4	4	16	6	6	2	14	6	25	5	36

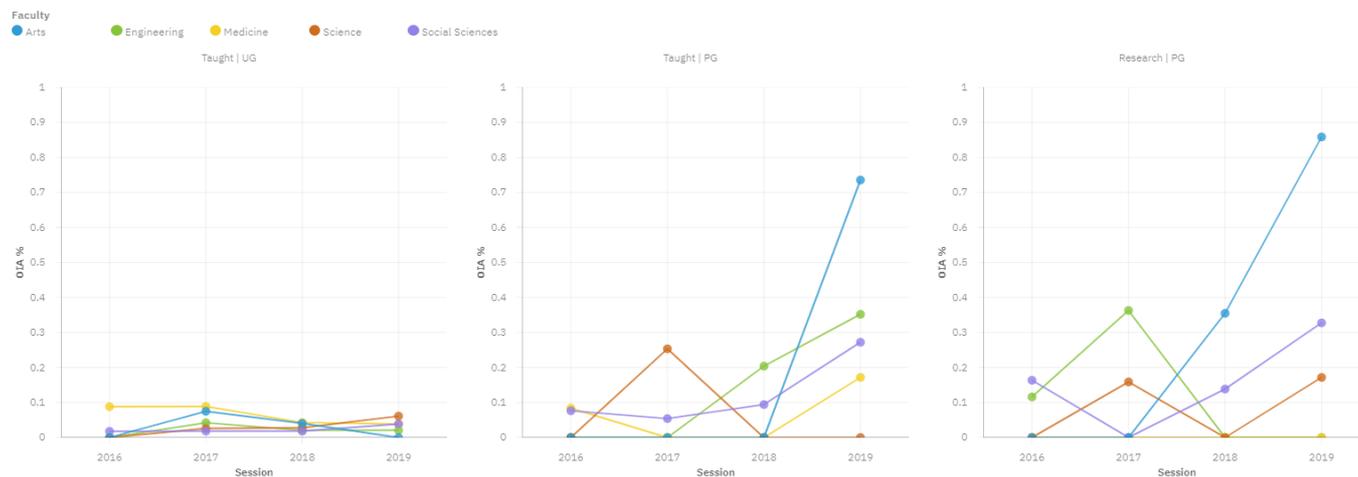
The figures below are true as at 8 February 2021.

Source of OIA Cases by Session and Student Group:

Session
 ● 2016 ● 2017 ● 2018 ● 2019



Percentage of Student Population with OIA Cases



3.9.1 OIA Annual Statement for 2019 (1.1.19 to 31.12.19)

The OIA Annual Statement provides a summary of OIA complaints handling for a given calendar year, which explains the discrepancy with the University’s data, which relates to the 2019-20 university academic year. HE institutions in England and Wales are placed in an OIA band, based on the number of students at the institution. The University of Sheffield is in Band F (20,001 – 30,000 students).

Calendar Year	2017		2018		2019	
Band F Comparison	TUOS	Band F Median	TUOS	Band F Median	TUOS	Band F Median
No. of complaints received at the OIA	17	15	16	19	19	17
No. of complaints closed by Outcome	19	14	11	15.5	17	17.5
Justified	1	0	1	1	1	0
Partially Justified	4	1	0	1	1	1
Not Justified	11	8	5	8.5	13	9
Settled	0	1	0	1	1	1
Not Eligible	4	2	4	2.5	1	1
Suspended/Withdrawn	3	0	1	1	0	2

The University of Sheffield is in line with the Band F median, as illustrated by the table above.

The OIA breaks down the complaints they received about the University by category of complaints. In 2019, the majority of complaints (59%) related to Academic Appeals (Complaints about academic matters such as assessment, progression and grades, including extenuating circumstances claims) while 24% related to “Service Issues” (Complaints about the course of teaching provision, facilities and supervision). The remaining complaints consisted of 1 Disciplinary (academic misconduct), 1 Financial (Complaints about finance and funding: e.g. fees and fee status, bursaries and scholarships), and 1 Equality law / Human rights (Complaints where the student claims there has been discrimination, including harassment, and where they claim their Human Rights have been breached).

Analysis of the annual statement data for all 21 Russell Group (RG) institutions (OIA data not provided for 4 RG institutions), reveals that the University had the fifth lowest figure for the number of complaints received by the OIA in 2019. Figures for other RG institutions ranged from 11 (Newcastle University – Band F) to 69 (University of Manchester – Band G). In the Band F category, specifically, the University held the fourth lowest figure for complaints out of the 8 RG rankings (2nd position was held jointly).

The University of Sheffield. The OIA Annual Statement also includes information about providers' compliance with its timescales for responses and recommendations. In the 2019 calendar (OIA) year, the University fully complied with OIA time limits for responses and recommendations.

Student Administration Service
March 2021