

Uoc

**Annual Report
of the
*Sindicatura
de Greuges*
(Ombuds Office)**

Academic year 2022/2023

Universitat Oberta
de Catalunya

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01

Introduction



Dra. Teresa Sancho

In my first academic year as the *síndica de greuges* (ombuds officer) of the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (UOC), I have had the opportunity to read and listen to what many people in our community had to say. They had all exhausted the established routes for resolving complaints/disputes and still felt upset, helpless or even that their rights had been violated. In this process, I have gradually built a framework of action based on the key values of respect, honesty and commitment. I say “gradually” because the exercise of the duties entrusted to me requires an understanding of the situations and an exploration of the possible ways to provide redress, a task that is by no means trivial and is always delicate.

The purpose of this report is to disseminate and report on the activities carried out by the *Sindicatura de Greuges* during academic year 2022/2023 based on a set of indicators. Indeed, the number of complaints and enquiries received, the type of complainant, the number of decisions and the recommendations issued by my office, as well as the institutional activities, provide a detailed picture of the activities carried out during this academic year. We can also observe its evolution since previous academic years.

In summary, we can say that last academic year we received 461 queries (29.9% more than the previous year (2021/2022) and an increase of 146.5% over the last five years). This has resulted in the initiation of 119 proceedings, leading to the same number of decisions, of which I directly resolved 114. The other five were resolved by other bodies of the university at my request. I also issued two recommendations for the Technology department and the Planning and Quality department. The *Sindicatura de Greuges* decided in favour of the complainant(s) in 19.3% of cases, a higher figure than last year’s 16.2%.

I would also like to highlight the UOC's participation in the meetings held by the Spanish Conference of University Ombuds Officers (CEDU) and the ombuds officers of the Vives Network of Universities, as well as its interactions with the *Sindicatura de Greuges* of Catalonia and other equivalent bodies at the municipal level.

Finally, I would also like to thank, above all, the university's programme directors, teaching staff and administrative staff for their active involvement in resolving the procedures and implementing my recommendations. I would also like to express my recognition for the university's governing bodies for their support throughout this academic year 2022/23.

Barcelona, 3 April 2023.



Dr Teresa Sancho Vinuesa
Síndica de greuges of the UOC



The UOC's *Sindicatura de Greuges*

The *Sindicatura de Greuges* of the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya is responsible for defending the rights and freedoms of all members of the UOC community in the face of any action or situation that is discriminatory, arbitrary or against which they have no defence, ensuring compliance with all the provisions of the Fundació per a la Universitat Oberta de Catalunya's statutes and the regulations implementing them and making every effort to maintain standards in all areas.

As stipulated in Article 44 of the UOC's Organizational and Operational Regulations, the *síndic(a) de greuges* of the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya is appointed by the Foundation's Board of Trustees on the recommendation of the rector.

The activities of the UOC's *Sindicatura de Greuges* are governed by the provisions of the UOC's Organizational and Operational Regulations and the Regulations for the functions and responsibilities of the *síndic de greuges* approved on 1 September 2008 and amended by the Executive Board on 10 February 2020.

U3

Actions

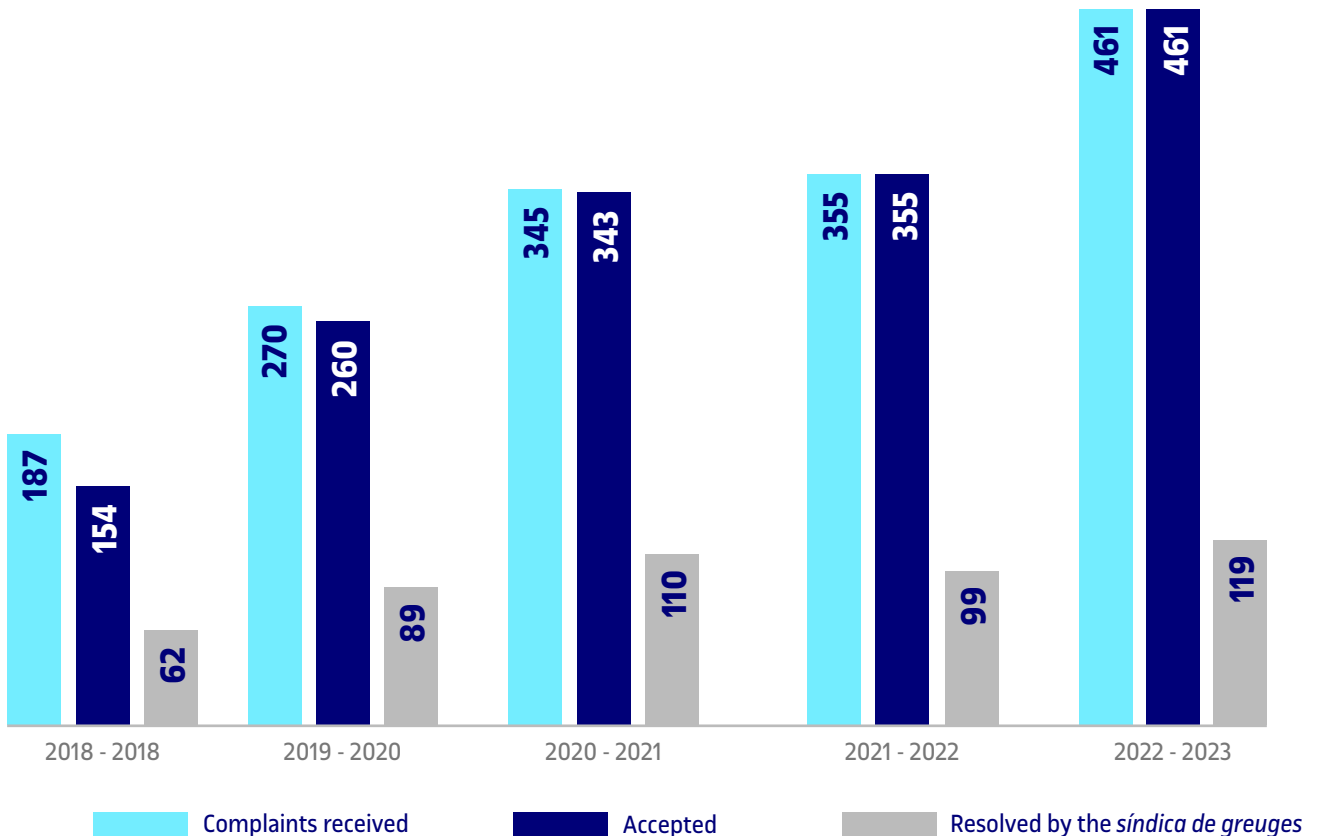
Disputes should be resolved in a more consensual manner.

Esther Giménez-Salinas,
síndica de greuges of Catalonia



In academic year 2022/2023, the *Sindicatura de Greuges* of the UOC received a total of 461 complaints or enquiries, 106 more than the previous year, and they were all accepted. Of these enquiries, 25.8% ended with a formal decision by the *Sindicatura de Greuges* (2.9% less than the previous year).

The number of complaints **has risen** by 146.5% since academic year 2018/2019 and **30% since last year**. A high percentage of enquiries were accepted for processing and finally redirected to other services of the university. In fact, the coordination effort between the *Sindicatura de Greuges* and the Help Service, as well as with the programme directors, has resulted in the percentage of complaints resolved by the *síndica de greuges* falling by almost three points this year. The section *Figures for the Sindicatura de Greuges* contains details of all the complaints received.



04

Profile of complainants and types of complaint

The UOC has gone from 4.3 to 5.3 complaints for every 1,000 students in just one academic year.



The UOC's *Sindicatura de Greuges* oversees the defence of the rights and freedoms of all members of its community, listening not only to students but also to faculty members, research staff and administrative staff. In fact, of the 461 submissions received, four were from the university's teaching and research staff and six from its affiliated teaching staff.

Considering that 98% of accepted enquiries were from students and that there were 86,654 students enrolled at the UOC this academic year 2022/2023 (4,713 more than last year), the ratio of enquiries was 5.3 for every 1,000 students.

This ratio is slightly higher than last year's (2021/2022), which stood at 4.3 complaints for every 1,000 students. The trend towards a sustained increase in the number of complaints submitted to the *Sindicatura de Greuges* during the academic year thus became sharper.

The majority of enquiries were made by bachelor's degree students (58.3% of all complaints). The highest number of complaints were from students in the Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences (29.1%), the Faculty of Economics and Business (18.2%) and the Faculty of Law and Political Science (16.9%), followed by the other faculties, as shown in the tables provided at the end of the report.

As for types of complaints and enquiries, the largest group was, like last year, related to assessment (107 in total, 23.2%). This was followed by complaints relating to university admissions and enrolment (83 in total, 18%). In third place this year were complaints relating to financial aspects of enrolment (58 in total, 12.6%), teaching (53 in total, 11.5%) and prior studies assessment (51 in total, 10.1%), with the rest lagging far behind.

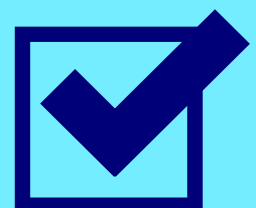
Of the complaints relating to assessment aspects, those relating to misconduct in assessments went from 27 to 19, continuing with the downward trend seen last year.

Decisions

Of the 461 cases accepted for processing, the *síndica de greuges* initiated 119 procedures, which were all formally resolved (30 more than last year, 2021/2022). The *síndica de greuges* issued the relevant decision in these cases, on several occasions with recommendations for the specific case, regardless of whether the decision had been in the complainant's favour or otherwise, and always with the aim of providing redress for the distress caused. In fact, 23 of the 119 cases were resolved in favour of the complainant.

In accordance with the provisions of the Regulations for the functions and responsibilities of the *síndic de greuges*, as not all possible avenues for resolution provided for by the UOC had been exhausted, the remaining 342 cases were redirected to other bodies of the university.

In academic year 2022/2023, the Sindicatura de Greuges ruled in favour of the complainant in 19.3% of cases



Recommendations

Although the *síndica de greuges* did not observe any violations of rights in most of the decisions issued, she did identify some actions to somehow provide redress for the distress suffered by the injured party or improve the quality of the university's actions. She stated this in the formal decision of the proceedings. However, there have been a couple of issues that, in her opinion, because of both their background and the number of people that could be affected by them, required a higher degree of formalization.

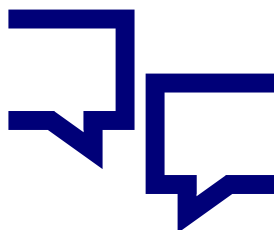
The specification and follow-up of the recommendations issued in academic year 2022/2023 have made it possible to carry out an in-depth reflection on the situation and design an action plan to successfully implement them.

Details of the two recommendations are provided below:

First recommendation: Regarding informing community members of technology issues

(Made in November 2022: several actions aimed at improving communication relating to the new learning environment were carried out.)

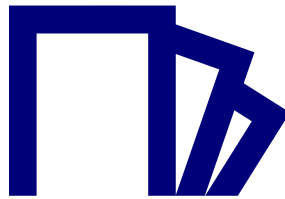
In relation to a student's complaint about issues caused by the replacement of the old applications of the Virtual Campus classroom forums, as well as other enquiries sent to the mailbox of the *Sindicatura de Greuges* in relation to this issue, the *síndica de greuges* made a recommendation to the university's Technology department. The recommendation was to review and improve the system for reporting technology issues on the Campus to facilitate decision-making by those involved in relation to teaching and learning at the UOC.



Second recommendation: Regarding the impact of modifying the programme of study for a programme during students' academic career

(Made in March 2023: pending implementation in accordance with the new in-depth review of the regulations.)

In relation to a student's complaint about the change of type of a course in a bachelor's degree that prevented them from completing their studies as planned, the UOC's *síndica de greuges* recommended to the director of the Planning and Quality department a review of the current mechanisms for applying the changes involved in modifying the programme of study of a programme at different levels.



Institutional activity

The institutional activity of the *Sindicatura de Greuges* during academic year 2022/23 has been considerable. Here is a summary of the activities carried out.

From 28 to 30 September 2022, the **24th Spanish Meeting of University Ombuds Officers**, organized by the Spanish Conference of University Ombuds Officers (CEDU), took place at the University of Santiago de Compostela.

The members of the UOC's Student Council invited the *síndica de greuges* to the **plenary session of the Student Council** held in the Can Jaumandreu building in Barcelona on Saturday 11 February 2023 to present and provide an overview of the *Sindicatura de Greuges* at the university.

On 29 and 30 May 2023, the **Technical Conference of University Ombuds Officers (CEDU)** was held in Madrid.

On 6 and 7 July 2023, the **14th Vives Network of Universities Meeting of University Ombuds Officers** took place at Universitat Rovira i Virgili in Tarragona.

On 11 September, an online meeting of the Executive Committee of CEDU was held to call elections and reappoint the members of the Committee and its president. The vote was held on 26 October, and University of Barcelona lecturer Lluís Caballol Angelats was elected.

The UOC's *Sindicatura de Greuges* is a member of a number of Catalan, Spanish and international networks and associations of university ombuds officers. They are the following:

[Ombuds officers group within the Vives Network of Universities](#)

[Spanish Conference of University Ombuds Officers \(CEDU\)](#)

[Mexican Network of University Ombuds Officers](#)



[Ibero-American Network of University Ombuds Officers](#)



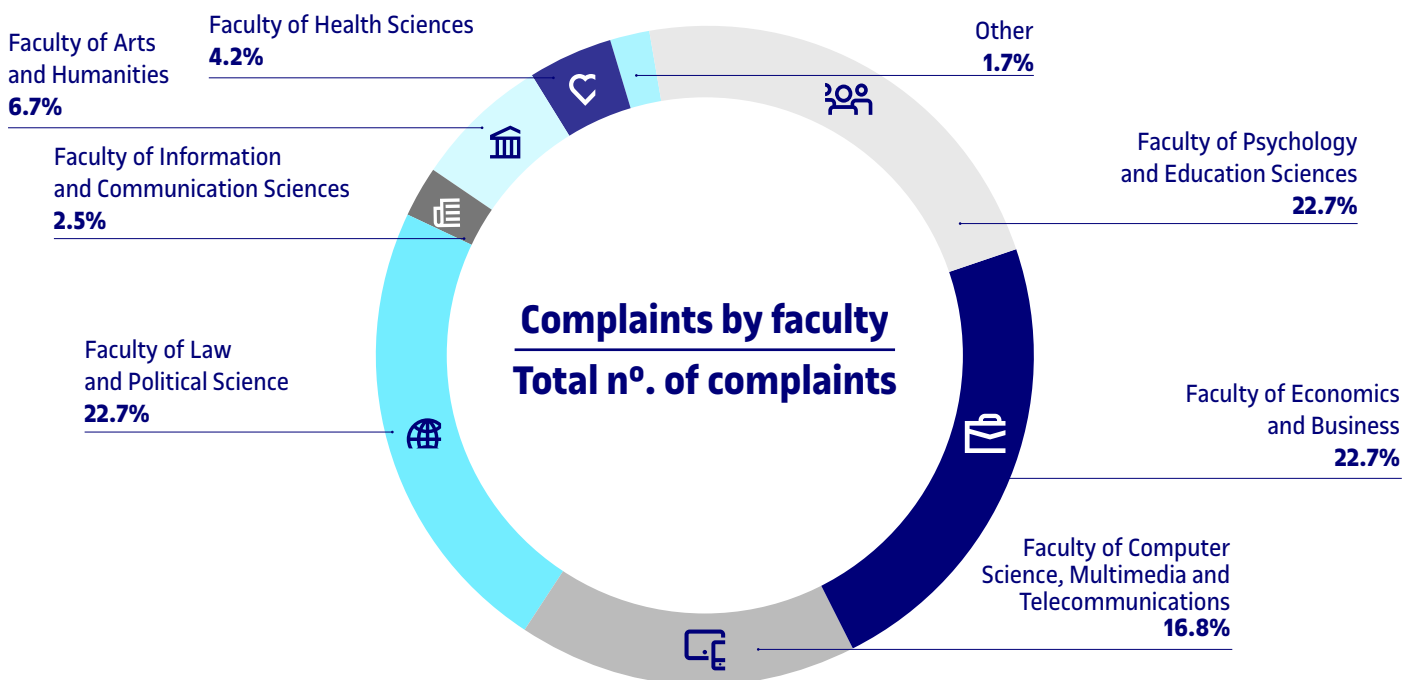
Figures for the *Sindicatura de Greuges*

This section sets out the main actions of the UOC's *Sindicatura de Greuges* in the form of tables or graphics.

	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023
Complaints received	187	270	345	355	461
Complaints accepted	154	260	343	355	461
(% of complaints received)	82.4%	96.3%	99.4%	100%	100%
Forwarded to other services	92	171	233	256	342
(% of complaints accepted)	59.7%	66.8%	67.9%	72.1%	74.2%
Resolved by the <i>síndica de greuges</i>	62	89	110	99	119
(% of complaints accepted)	40.3%	34.2%	32.1%	27.9%	25.8%
Complaints resolved	63	89	110	99	119
Complaints resolved in favour of the complainant	13	21	12	16	23
(% of complaints resolved)	20.96%	23.6%	10.91%	16.16%	19.33%
Ruled against the complainant	49	67	96	83	96
(% of complaints resolved)	79.03%	75.28%	87.27%	83.84%	80.67%
Other		1	2		

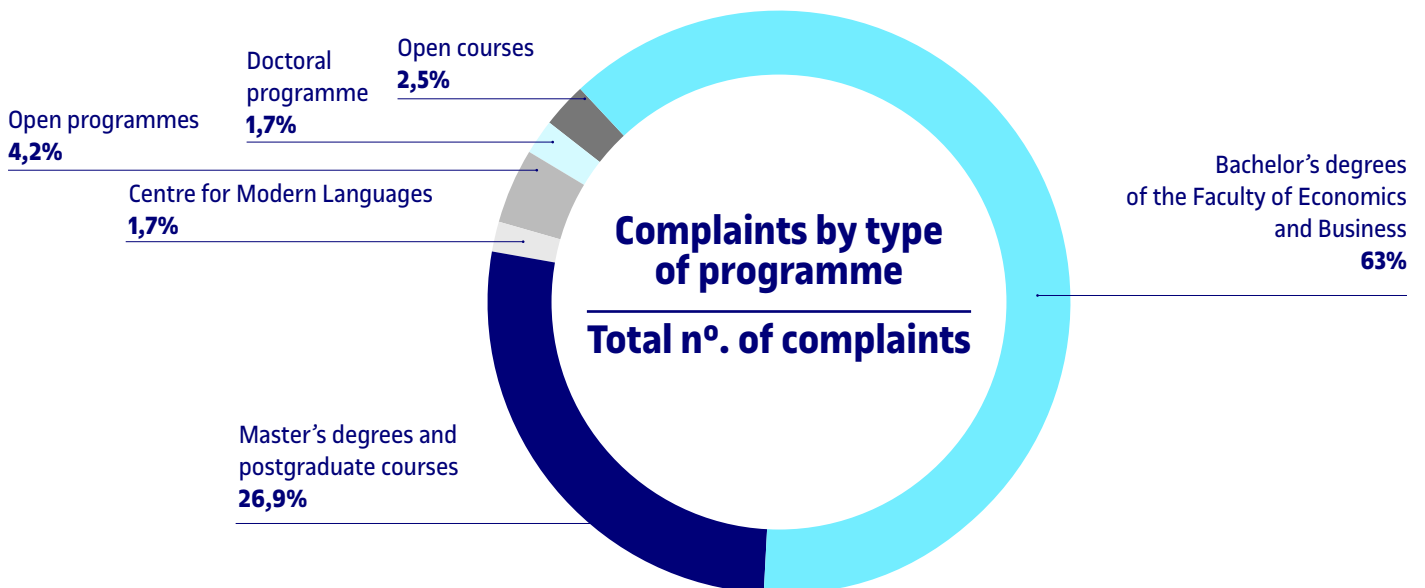
Complaints by faculty

	Students	Complaints resolved	Percentage (complaints / total no. of complaints)
Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences	18,338	27	0.14%
Faculty of Economics and Business	15,334	27	0.17%
Faculty of Computer Science, Multimedia and Telecommunications	13,264	20	0.15%
Faculty of Law and Political Science	12,146	27	0.22%
Faculty of Information and Communication Sciences	6,484	3	0.04%
Faculty of Arts and Humanities	5,901	8	0.13%
Faculty of Health Sciences	2,005	5	0.25%
Doctoral School	330	0	0%
Other		2	
Total	71,625	119	

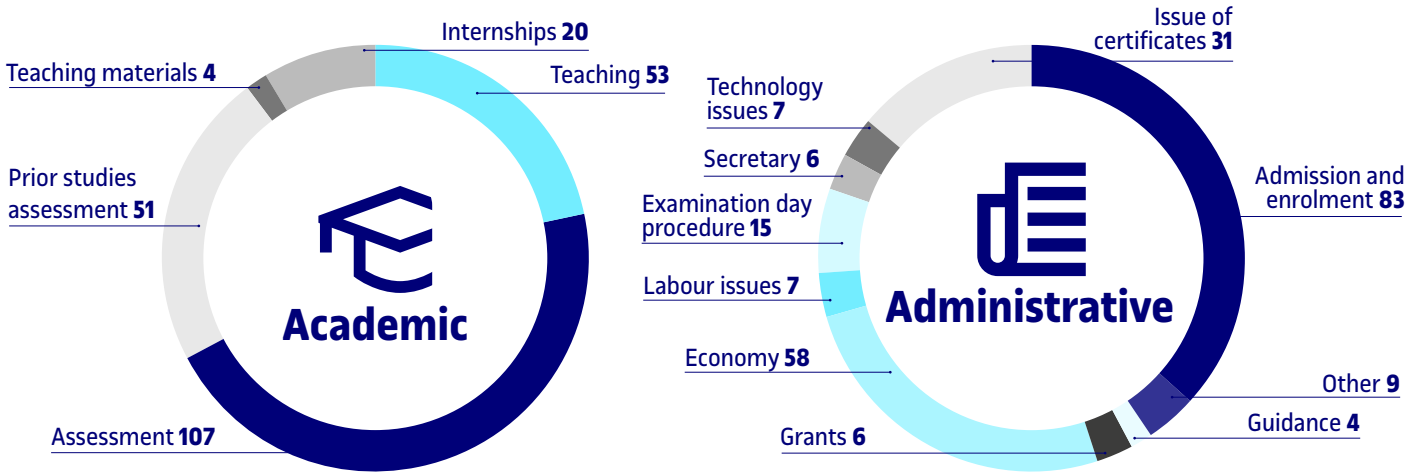


Complaints by type of programme

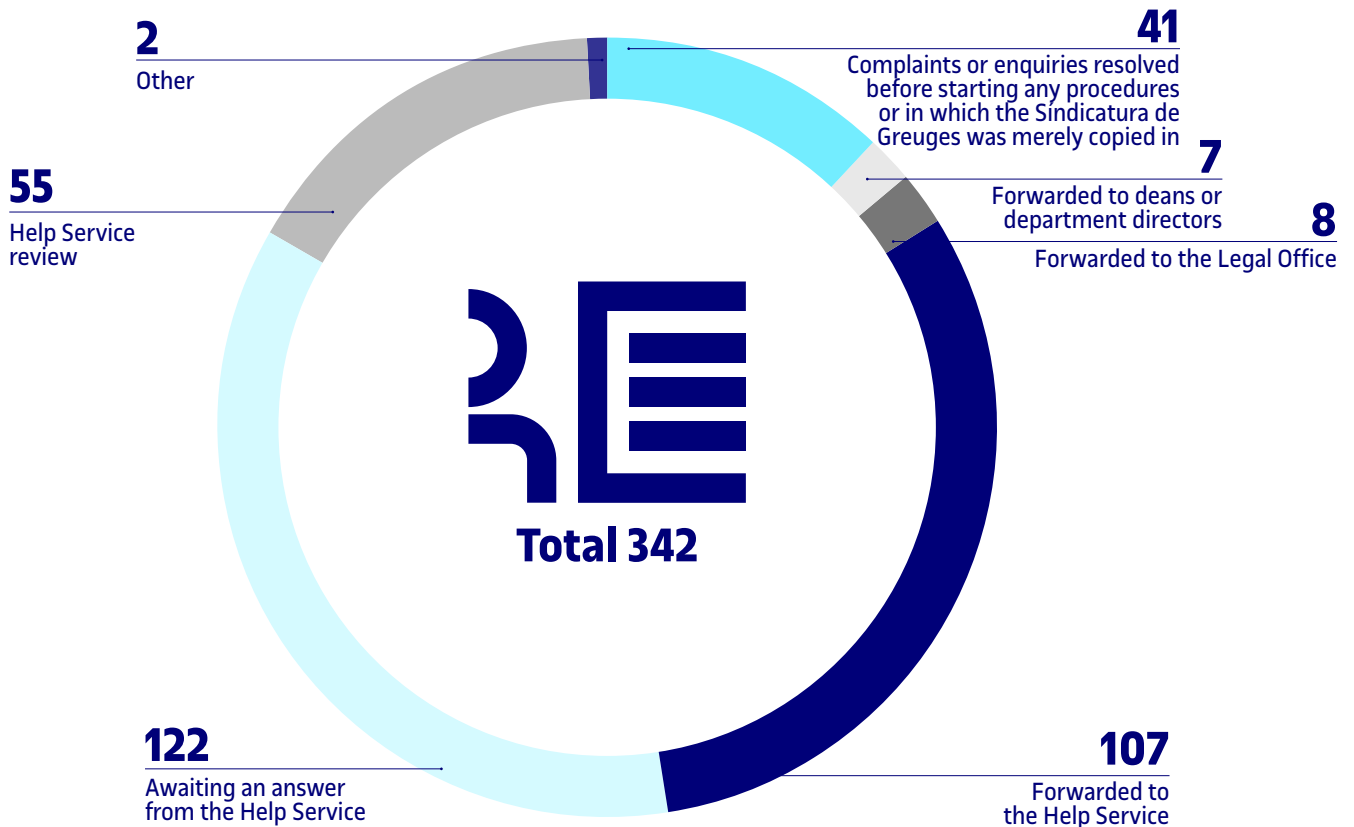
	Students	Complaints resolved	Percentage (complaints / total no. of complaints)
Bachelor's degrees of the Faculty of Economics and Business	51,556	75	0.15%
Master's degrees and postgraduate courses	25,416	32	0.13%
Centre for Modern Languages	5,500	2	0.4%
Open programmes	3,181	5	0.16%
Doctoral programme	330	2	0.60%
Open courses	671	3	0.40%
Total	86,654	119	



Complaints by subject area



Referral of complaints or enquiries to other bodies



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