

ANNUAL COMPLAINTS HANDLING REPORT

2019-20



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Context

The College operates its complaints handling procedures in accordance with the Scottish Public Sector Ombudsman. The college regards “expressions of dissatisfaction” as opportunities to review and amend its’ practices, and recognises complaints as key elements of learner [and other stakeholders] feedback. This report is a summary of the complaints received and actions taken for the academic session 2019 – 2020.

Trends

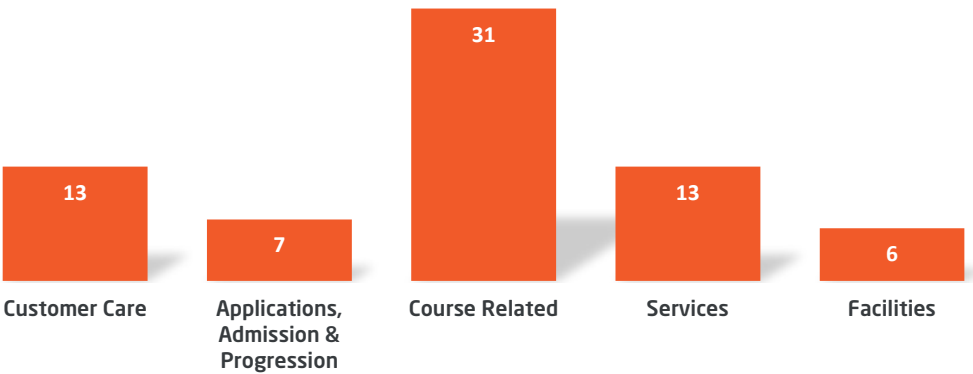
The number of complaints received last session was 70. This was considerably less than the previous session, reflecting an ongoing trend decline.

Figures for the total number of complaints received for the last three sessions are provided below.

Total Number of Complaints by session		
2017 - 2018	2018-2019	2019-2020
133	97	70

Most complaints received were categorised as “course related” – see chart. A more detailed breakdown is provided.

Total Session 2019-2020



Complaint Categories

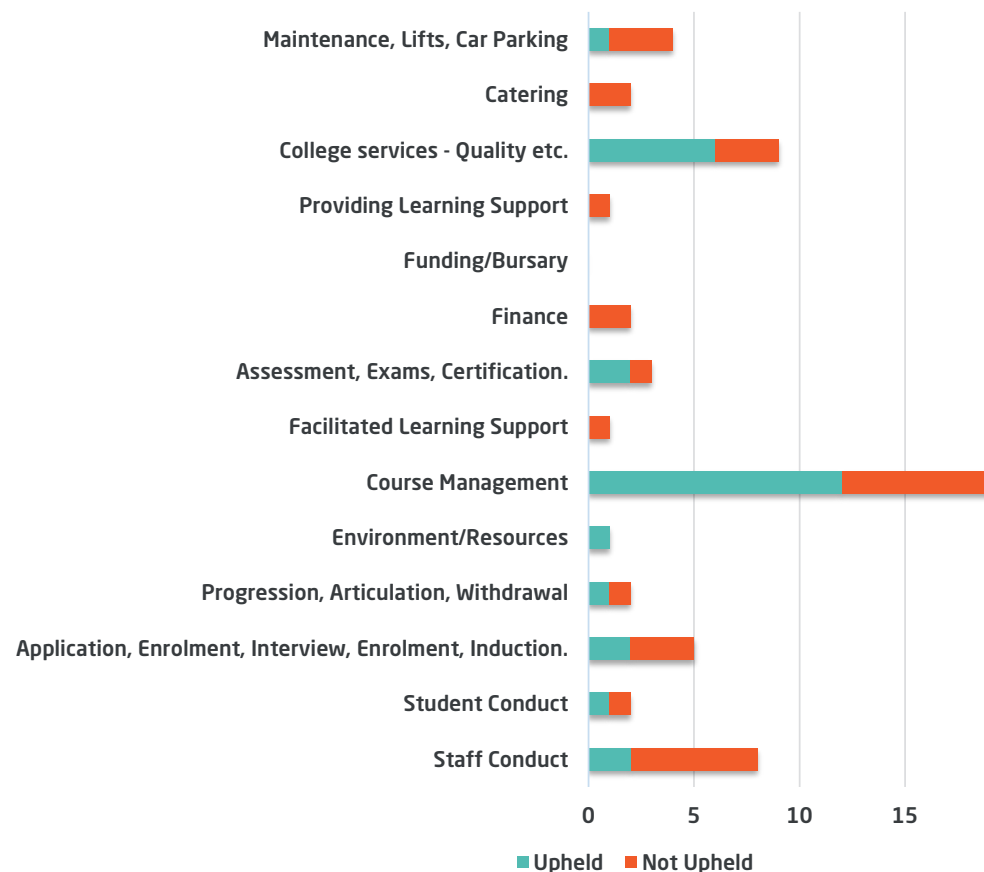
A more detailed examination of the data reveals that the majority of complaints were concerned with:

- ▲ **Course Management**
- ▲ **Assessment and Certification**
- ▲ **Application and related processes**

Course Management complaints related to arrangements for covering staff absence, quality of provision of assessment feedback, and failure to make reasonable adjustments. 50% of the complaints in this category were upheld.



Complaint Categories 2019- 2020



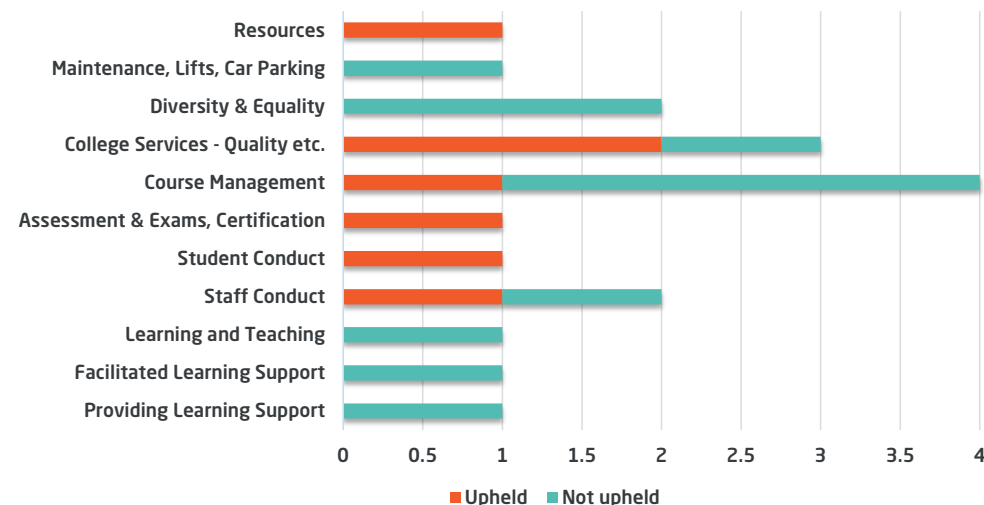
Protected Characteristics

A total of 18 complainants identified a protected characteristic for session 2019-20. This is fewer than last session where we received 26 such complaints, and constitutes a slightly smaller proportion of the total [25% compared to 27%]

Overall 38% of complaints from complainants who declared a protected characteristic were upheld, compared to 40% being upheld for all complainants.

Consistent with overall complaints, "Course Management" was the most common cause of complaint, followed by College Services, Diversity and Staff Conduct.

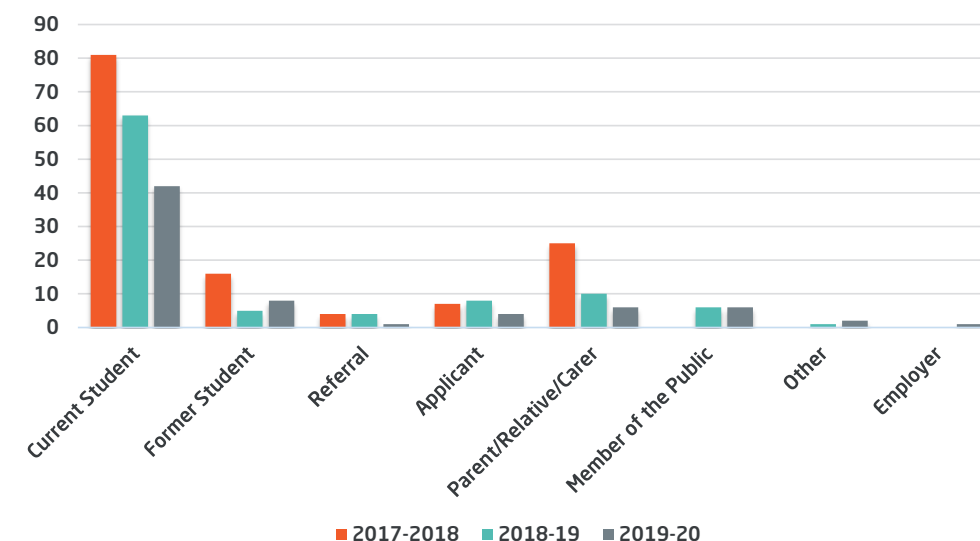
Protected Characteristics Complaint Categories



Who complains?

Complaints were received overwhelmingly by current students. The mixture of complainants is consistent with previous sessions, as the graph demonstrates.

Complainants are.....

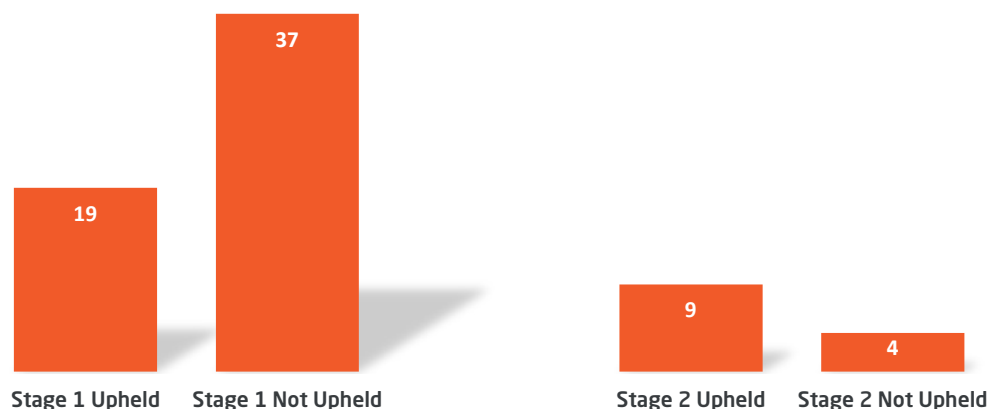


Complaint Decisions

The SPSO uses two categories in relation to complaints. Some complaints can be responded to quickly. The SPSO refers to these as Stage 1 complaints, for which we received a total of 56 last session. Out of these 19 were upheld and 37 were not upheld.

Those which require investigation, and take longer to reply to, are referred to as Stage 2 Complaints by the SPSO. The college received 13 last session. Out of these 9 were upheld and 4 were not upheld. One complaint has had to be carried over into session 2020 - 2021.

Complaint Decisions 2019 - 2020



Lessons Learned

Although the majority of complaints were not upheld, the process of submitting complaints provide opportunities for us to review our practices and processes. The following describes a number of actions we have taken, or are taking, in relation to some of the complaints we have received last session.

Content

1. Hairdressing: Following expressions of concern, resulting discussion on why units are poorly received. Agreement on changes across all campuses.
2. Social Sciences: Delivering additional online classes to help students understand key areas of the syllabus and who found learning from home, particularly challenging.
3. Sport: Concerns that Universities were expecting completion of a Mechanics unit. This has now been added to the HNC Fitness, Health and Exercise course; students now meet the prerequisites for degree programmes
4. Childhood Practice: Concerns about mental health issues lead to the addition of Mental Health units to the Entry level course. Students reported they found these units beneficial in terms of life skills.
5. Construction & Building Services: Listening to student's and employer's complaints regarding size of workshops at Clydebank Campus.
6. Maths: Developing a 'flipped classroom' approach to online teaching in response to student complaints, in some classes. Now students can independently learn Maths topics in their own time. Online classes are then used to consolidate learning and identify areas for clarification.
7. Essential Skills: Concerns that curriculum was not bespoke. Re-iteration that students are presented to the unit that is best suited for them. Majority of delivery in essential skills components is bi level, to allow as many learners as possible to work at their level
8. Sciences: Curriculum redesign as students have fed back their issues with selection of course units and timetables. Consequential adjustments to open book assessments included discussion with students on sequence of assessment and time scales involved.
9. Childhood Practice: Modifications to both learning and assessment practices as a result of COVID 19 lead to some students expressing concerns. Staff worked tirelessly to develop differing assessments which would encompass a variety of learning styles.
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Satisfaction

Context

Very low response rates from previous attempts encouraged us to develop a new methodology for achieving feedback. In addition, we wanted to be able to make a comparative analysis which would allow us to reflect on data by both the outcome [decision] reached, and by the complexity surrounding the complaint. Stage 2 complaints require more time to complete, and generally more complex.

Methodology

We attempted to contact 20 complainants and achieved a response rate of 95%. Although this is a substantially higher proportion than that achieved by previous methods, the disparity in the methodologies adopted make simple comparisons invalid. Since Stage 2 complainants constituted a much smaller proportion of all complaints received, the random selection was chosen from within the following distinct groups:

▲ **Stage 1: 6 Upheld and 6 Not Upheld**

▲ **Stage 2: 4 Upheld and 4 Not Upheld***

** Last session there were only 4 Stage 2 complaints not upheld. When we were unable to contact one of the complainants from this category, we did not have anyone else to ask*

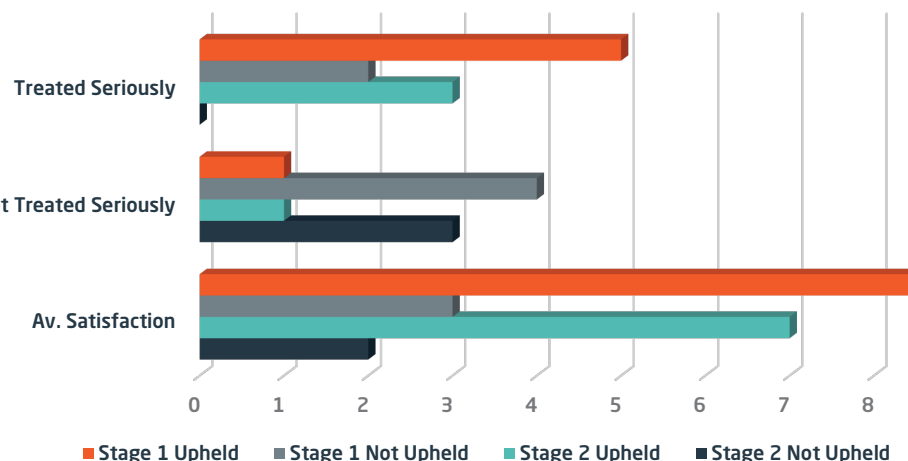
Each of those contacted were asked two questions:

1. **Do you think your complaint was taken seriously? [Y/N], and**
2. **How satisfied are you - on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being low and 10 high - with the way in which your complaint was handled?**

Results

The following chart summarises the picture:

Comparative Satisfaction by Stage and Decision



Analysis

The analysis of the data suggests that:

- ▲ **Complaints that were upheld achieved much higher levels of satisfaction compared to those that were not upheld;**
- ▲ **Stage 1 complainants were more satisfied overall compared to Stage 2 complainants.**
- ▲ **All Stage 2 complainants we managed to contact and whose complaint was not upheld, did not believe their complaint was taken seriously**

***A cautionary note:** all complaints are different, and aggregating the data for comparative purposes has limited usefulness, as are any conclusions drawn.*

SPSO Referrals

The College had two complaints referred to the SPSO, neither of which required modifications to any of our procedures or policies.

The table below summarises all college data relating to time-scales for the resolution of complaints in 2018 - 2019.

COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCEDURE INDICATORS				Q1		Q2		Q3		Q4		YTD		2018/19	
1.0	Total number of complaints received & complaints received per 100 population														
1.1	Complaints Received	20		16		22		12		70		92			
1.2	College Population	12329	0.2	16027	0.1	16027	0.1	16027	0.1	16027	0.4	18064	0.5		
2.0	Number of complaints closed at Stage 1 and % of total closed														
2.1	Number of complaints closed at Stage 1 and % of total closed	13	65.0%	12	75.0%	10	45.5%	7	58.3%	42	60.0%	47	51.1%		
2.2	Number of complaints closed at Stage 2 and % of total closed	7	35.0%	4	25.0%	12	54.5%	4	33.3%	27	38.6%	42	45.7%		
2.3	Number of complaints closed after Escalation and % of total closed	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%		
2.4	Open	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	8.3%	1	1.4%	3	3.3%		
3.0	STAGE 1: Target timescales within 5 working days														
3.1	Number and % Stage 1 complaints upheld	3	23.1%	4	33.3%	6	60.0%	4	57.1%	17	40.5%	17	36.2%		
3.2	Number and % Stage 1 complaints not upheld	10	76.9%	8	66.7%	4	40.0%	3	42.9%	25	59.5%	30	63.8%		
3.3	Total working days and average time in working days to close complaints at Stage 1														
3.4	Number and % Stage 1 complaints closed within 5 working days	5	38.5%	8	66.7%	7	70.0%	3	42.9%	23	54.8%	32	68.1%		
3.5	Number and % Stage 1 complaints not closed within 5 working days	6	46.2%	4	33.3%	3	30.0%	4	57.1%	17	40.5%	15	31.9%		
3.6	Number and % of Stage 1 complaints closed within 10 working days (extension)	6	100.0%	4	100.0%	3	100.0%	4	100.0%	17	100.0%	15	100.0%		
3.7	Number and % of Stage 1 complaints not closed within 10 working days (extension)	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%		
4.0	STAGE 2: Target timescales within 20 working days														
4.1	Number and % Stage 2 complaints upheld	3	42.9%	2	50.0%	8	66.7%	2	50.0%	15	55.6%	21	50.0%		
4.2	Number and % Stage 2 complaints not upheld	4	57.1%	2	50.0%	4	33.3%	2	50.0%	12	44.4%	21	50.0%		
4.3	Total working days and average time in working days to close complaints at Stage 2	143	20.4	69	17.2	335	27.9	65	16.2	612	22.7	1140	27.1		
4.4	Number and % Stage 2 complaints closed within 20 working days	5	71.4%	3	75.0%	5	41.7%	4	100.0%	17	63.0%	18	42.9%		
4.5	Number and % Stage 2 complaints not closed within 20 working days	2	28.6%	1	25.0%	7	58.3%	0	0.0%	10	37.0%	24	57.1%		
4.6	Number and % of Stage 2 complaints closed within 40 working days (extension)	2	100.0%	1	100.0%	6	85.7%	0	0.0%	9	90.0%	19	79.2%		
4.7	Number and % of Stage 2 complaints not closed within 40 working days (extension)	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	14.3%	1	100.0%	2	20.0%	5	20.8%		
5.0	ESCALATED : Complaints escalated from Stage 1 to Stage 2														
5.1	Number and % Escalated complaints upheld	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%		
5.2	Number and % Escalated complaints not upheld	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%		
5.3	Total working days and average time in working days to close complaints at Stage 1	0.0%		0.0%		0.0%		0.0%		0	0.0%	0	0.0		
5.4	Number and % of Escalated complaints closed within 20 working days	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%		
5.5	Number and % of Escalated complaints not closed within 20 working days	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%		
5.6	Number and % of Escalated complaints closed within 40 working days (extension)	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%		
5.7	Number and % of Escalated complaints not closed within 40 working days (extension)	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%		

Definitions

Further Education Complaints Performance Indicators

The following definitions for stage 1, stage 2, and escalated should be consistently applied throughout all indicators.

Stage 1	<p>This means those responded to at stage 1 (frontline resolution).</p> <p>This does not include those escalated from stage 1 to stage 2. These will be counted in the escalated complaints.</p> <p>This includes those where the extended timeline (i.e. + additional 5 working days) was used.</p>
Stage 2	<p>This means those responded to at stage 2 (investigation).</p> <p>This refers to those complaints considered directly at stage 2 for the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">* straight away by complainant (this refers to customers who did not wish to be dealt with at stage 1 and wished to go straight to stage 2)* straight away by the College, or within a day or so after due consideration (i.e. College recognised complex, serious, high risk nature of the complaint and felt it was not suitable to be considered at stage 1) <p>This includes those where the extended timeline (i.e. + additional 20 working days) was used.</p>
Escalated	<p>This means those escalated from stage 1 to stage 2.</p> <p>This refers to those complaints where the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of the frontline resolution and have requested that their case be escalated to stage 2 for investigation.</p> <p>This includes those complaints where escalation was required because frontline resolution timescales were not met (i.e. 11 working days or more). Therefore automatic escalation rules apply.</p>
Population	<p>This figure will represent the total student population. For example the number of matriculated students at an agreed date.</p>
CDN	<p>College Development Network</p>
SPSO	<p>Scottish Public Sector Ombudsman</p>



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