

West College Scotland

Report on Complaints received during session  
2021 – 2022

Publication Date: Autumn 2022

## 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 2021 – 2022.

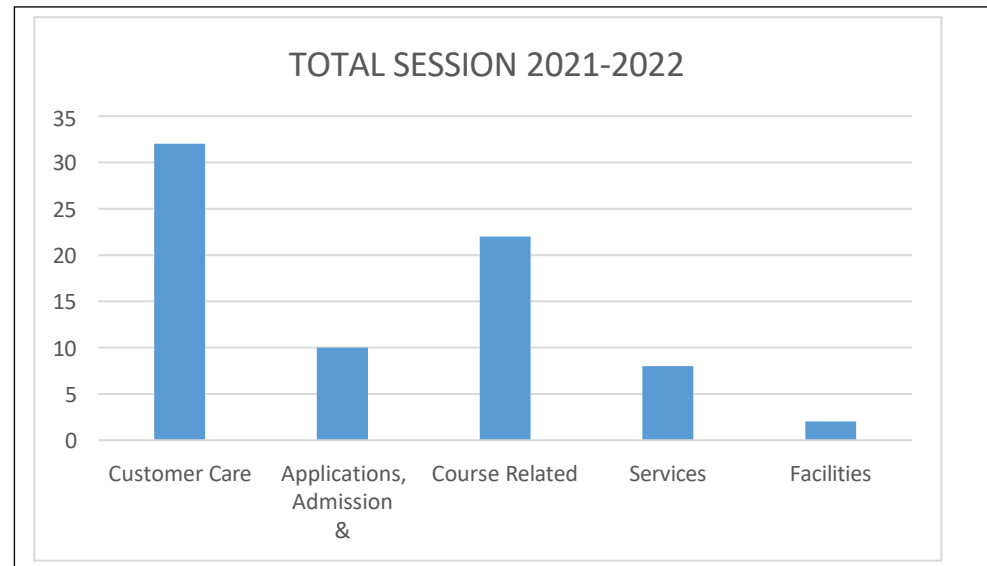
## Trends

The number of complaints received last session was 74. This was higher than the previous session, but consistent with session 2020 - 2021.

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

Total Number of Complaints by session		
2019 – 2020	2012-2021	2021-2022
70	63	74

Most complaints received were categorised under heading: “Customer Care” – see chart. A more detailed breakdown is provided below.

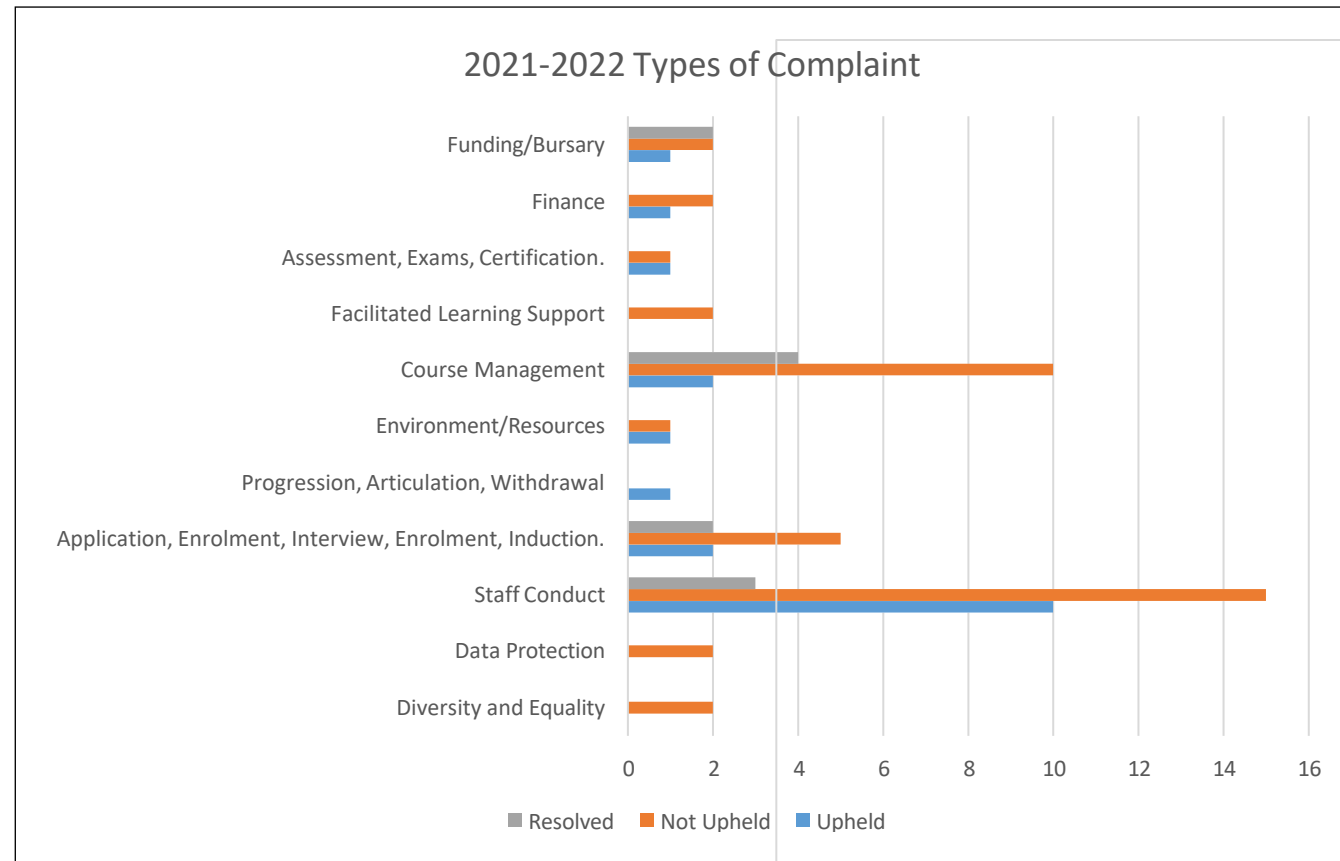


A more detailed examination of the data reveals that the majority of complaints were concerned with:

- Staff Conduct
- Course Management

Staff Conduct complaints were primarily related to on-line learning experiences or behaviours.

Course Management complaints related to arrangements for covering staff absence, quality of provision of assessment feedback, and failure to make reasonable adjustments.



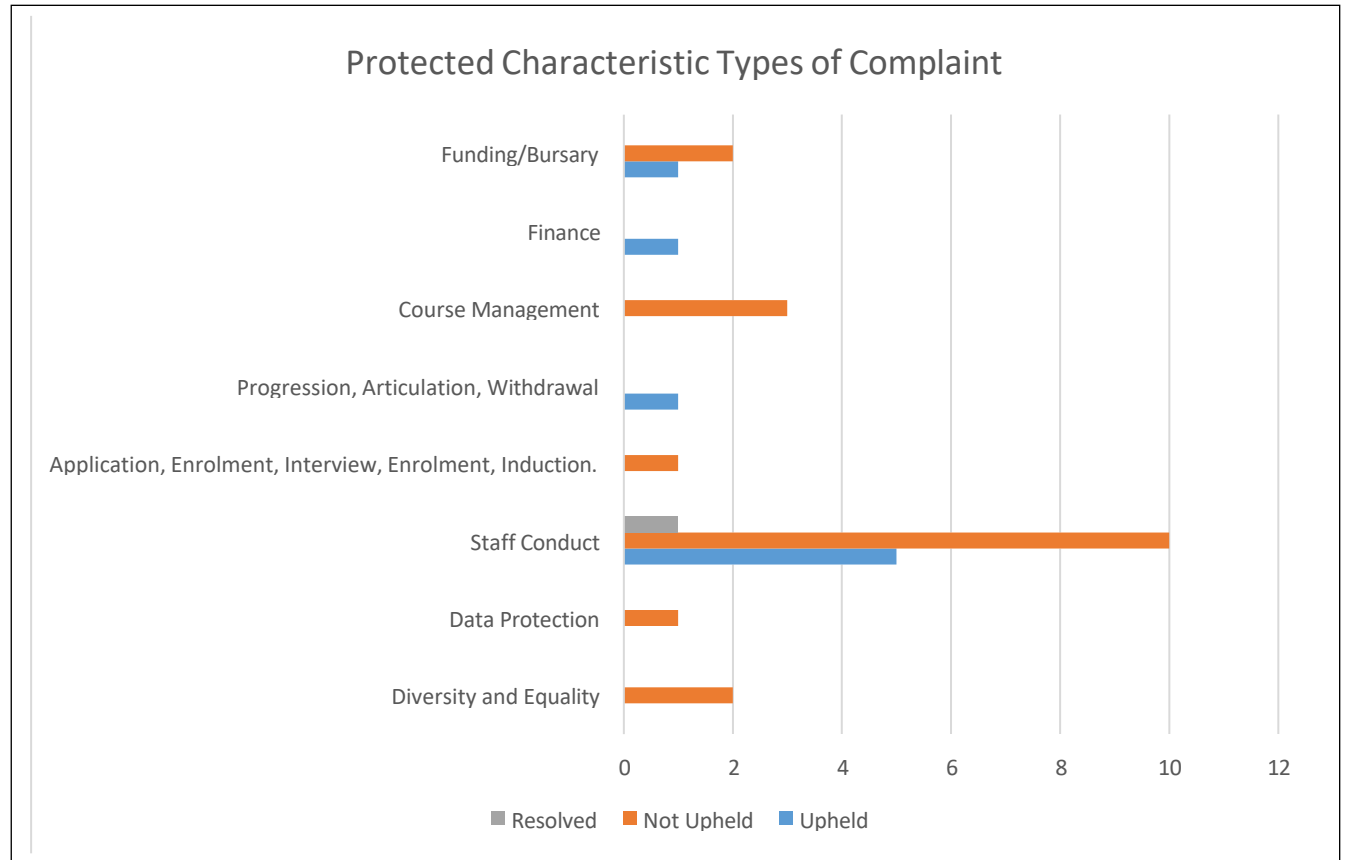
## Protected Characteristics

A total of 32 complainants identified a protected characteristic for session 2021-22. This represents 43% of all complaints received and is significantly higher than last session.

Out of the 32 complaints received, 10 were upheld and 1 resolved, which is 34% of the total. This compares to an equivalent comparative figure of 43% for all complaints.

This would suggest that the experience for students with a protected characteristic is slightly less favourable compared to the situation for all complainants. The College will continue to monitor this situation to

determine if any action is required. The terms of the Equality Impact Statement for our complaints procedure assumes a neutral position – that is, the implementation of our complaints handling procedure should not benefit or discriminate any particular group. Subsequent reports will comment on the monitoring of this aspect.



### Who complains?

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

### Complaint Decisions

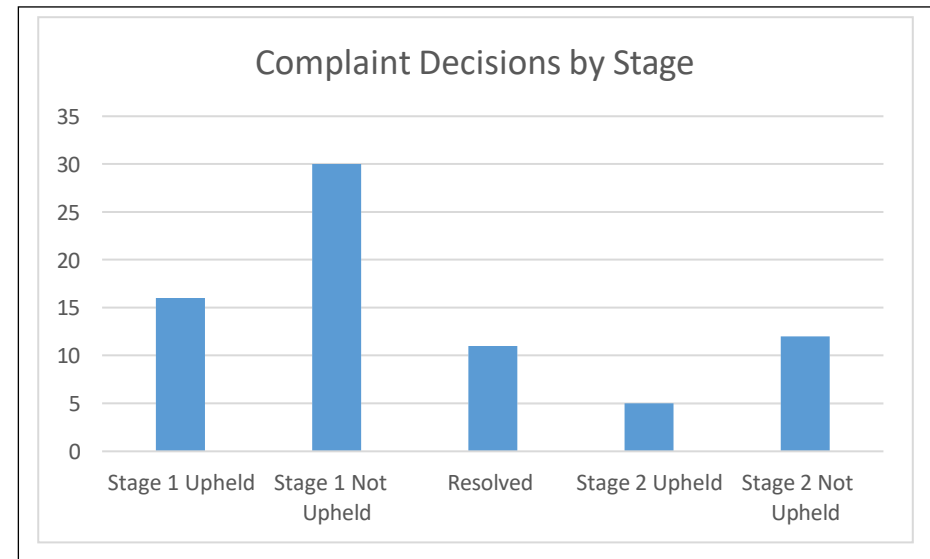
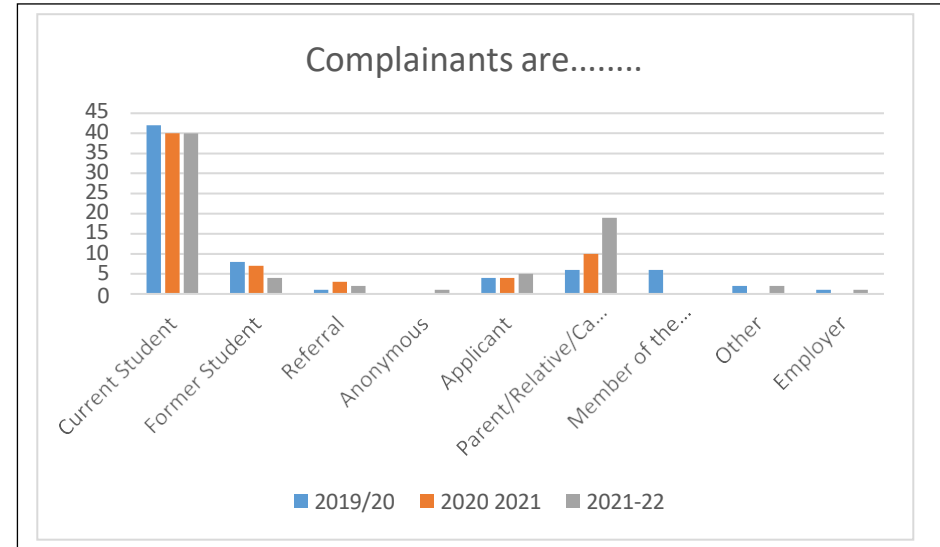
The SPSO uses two categories in relation to categorising complaints. Some complaints can be responded to quickly. The SPSO refers to these as Stage 1 complaints.

Those which require investigation, and take longer to reply to, are referred to as Stage 2 Complaints by the SPSO.

Complaints are determined in one of three categories. They can be upheld; not upheld, or resolved. The resolved category is used in those situations where that response is considered to be more appropriate.

The data for session 2020-21 is displayed in the chart.

The vast majority of all complaints received were categorised as Stage 1 [74%]



## **Lessons Learned**

The following provides some examples of how curriculum teams have responded to the issues raised by students, a significant number of which were about learning on-line. Information has been provided by individual sectors.

## **Care**

- Complaints about the amount of blended learning, along with changes to on-campus timings.
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  - Last year was more difficult as delays in Scottish Government guidance made it difficult to plan on campus delivery with any certainty.

## **Construction & Building services**

- Issues with the enrolment process for 4<sup>th</sup> year students
  - 4<sup>th</sup> year students only attend campus for one week per year. All Construction courses to be given a start date of the first week in August and then a finish date of the 31<sup>st</sup> of July the following year, thus allowing enrolment links to be immediately available.

## **Creative and Digital Industries**

- Limited diagnosis of IT skills at the start of the course
- Poor feedback on progress
  - Team to consider utilising a diagnostic test to get an ICT level for everyone.

- When fully on campus we will be more able to spot students who are struggling with their ICT skills. A return to face to face classes should make a big difference in terms of feedback on progress as it will not be dependant on online engagement.

## **Engineering**

- Too much online provision
  - The preference amongst both staff and students was for learning to take place on campus to ensure that there was sufficient access to workshops and labs for practical work and demonstrations.
  - However, as you will be aware there were times in the last year when all classes had to move online based on COVID guidance.
  - It should be noted that Engineering and Motor Vehicle across the board had a larger on campus presence than all other sectors with the exception of Construction

## **Hairdressing, Beauty and Make-Up Artistry**

- **Limited resources:**
  - We are looking into seeing if we can re-design the request process when linking with dispensary. i.e.. Increase quantity available for students in class / widen the range request etc.
  - On occasion, we experienced a delay in us receiving replenishes, mainly due to the global short supply as a result of the pandemic.
- **Too much online provision:**

- From the start of this academic term 2022/23 we are adopting a 95% on-campus activity approach. Online activity by exception (beneficial to student ongoing review).

### **Learner Development**

- Too much online provision
  - The volume of online delivery in the last academic year fluctuated dramatically due to Government imposed lockdowns. Once classes were permitted to return to campus Learner Development was at the forefront of this return and had in excess of 90% of our provision back on campus after Easter 2022.
  - The proportion of online classes in the next session is expected to be around 5% of full time classes.

### **Maths, Science, Social Science and Sport**

- Limited coordination of assessment scheduling
- Too much online provision
  - Our online provision is drastically reduced with all classes on campus for face to face the first block. We will maintain a blended model of learning on same courses moving forward in blocks 2 and 3.



## **Satisfaction**

Approximately 25% of complainants were sampled on their perceptions of their experience with our complaints handling procedure.

Out of those sampled, 41% felt their complaint was taken seriously

The overall level of satisfaction was 31%

## **SPSO Referrals**

The College had 3 complaints referred to the SPSO during session 2020 2021. In all three cases, the SPSO determined that the College had acted reasonably in reaching their decisions, and that the SPSO would not be taking matters further.

