ANNUAL COMPLAINTS HANDLING REPORT

2015-16

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WEST COLLEGE
SCOTLAND

Introduction

The college operates it's 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 a key element of learner [and other stakeholders] feedback. This annual report is a summary of complaints received and actions taken for the period 1st August 2015 to 31st July 2016

Trends

The number of recorded complaints for 2015-2016 was 168; 75% more than in the previous session 2014-2015. The increase in recorded complaints was in part due to improved recording activities, along with the impact of exceptional factors. In the third quarter of the session, approximately 60% of all the complaints received were in relation to industrial action by teaching staff.

For session 2015-2016, the most frequent categories of complaints were:

Course Management: 53%

Student Finance: 14%

Staff Conduct: 12%

Admissions/Progression: 8%

Issues relating to course management were affected by the impact of industrial action, with classes cancelled. Other complaints in this category were mainly concerned with assessment related factors. Complaints received in the category of "Staff conduct" were primarily about the type and manner in which feedback on assessment was provided.

Who complains to us?

Complaints were mainly received from current and former students [72%], followed by complaints submitted on behalf of students by parents/carers [16%].

The proportion of complaints upheld in session 2015-2016 was 21%; this compares to 32% for session 2014-2015. This decrease is not considered significant since the reasons for the outcome decision are specific to each complaint. The college will, however, continue to monitor year on year, changes in trends.

Circulation

The College produces quarterly and annual reports on it's complaint handing procedures which are published on our website, following approval by the Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee . Prior to approval complaints are reviewed internally by

- **The Senior Management Team**
- **The Educational Leadership Team**
- **The Quality Management and Approvals Committee**
- **Representatives of the Student Association**

Implementation Developments

The operation of the College complaints handling procedures are subject to review by College management. During 2015/16 an independent external audit of the College feedback processes highlighted areas for improvement. Procedures have been modified in response to audit recommendations .

The College is a member of the College Sector Complaints Handling Advisory Group , which works in partnership with the SPSO to develop a sector model for complaints handling.

As a result of sector initiatives, this annual report includes, for the first time, the results of a post response satisfaction survey. Furthermore, as a result of the work with this group, the college will be adopting agreed standardised complaint categories from session 2016 - 2017.

Customer Satisfaction

Post response surveys were introduced during the session 2015/16. In total, 90 were issued to complainants after their complaint had been closed. Eight returns were received; a response rate of 9%.

Out of those received, the majority [62%] expressed dissatisfaction with the way in which their complaint was handled. On closer review of the comments expressed, it was clear that levels of dissatisfaction related to the decision outcome, rather than the process itself.

For session 2016/17, the College has amended the wording of the survey questions and are utilising an electronic version, with an aim to increase the number of responses received, and improve the quality of the information provided.

How Have Complaints Changed Our Practices?

The College accepts that expressions of dissatisfaction offer an opportunity to review our practices, and to make adjustments – where appropriate and reasonable – in response.

For example, the proportion of complaints with regard to Student Funding reduced from 26% in 2014-2015 to 14% in 2015-2016. This suggests that the remedial measures undertaken in 2015-2016 had a positive impact on improving the student experience. The College continues to monitor complaints in this category with a view to continually improving the service offered. The College recruited additional staff and provided scanning /uploading facilities for student use during session 2015-2016 and for session 2016 - 2017, has opened up the applications process much earlier than in previous sessions. Its anticipated that these measures will make the funding applications process both easier and quicker , further reducing the number of complaints in this category.

Some specific examples of complaint outcomes are illustrated below:

Complaint: Student Funding
[Case Reference 15023 - Not Upheld]

The complainant cited excessive time-scales for processing their Student Funding application. In this instance the complaint was not upheld since the students did not provide all the necessary documentation requested, to enable prompt consideration of the application. The College has reviewed and improved its advice to applicants on documentation required.

Complaint: Estates
[Case Reference 15035 - Not Upheld]

Complaint related to allegation of no warning about library closure. The library was closed as a result of a staff training activity. While information had been provided, by notices on the door of the library, it was agreed that in future these would be more prominent and posted earlier to minimise any inconvenience to users.

Complaint: Staff Conduct
[Case Reference 15036 - Upheld]

This complaint related to a visit to a local primary school by teachers from another country. The college was hosting/facilitating this event. During the visit the visitors took photographs of the classrooms and the individuals present, including the children attending the school. The head teacher expressed their concerns about the activities of the foreign teachers, and highlighted that a member of college staff did not accompany the foreign teachers at all times during the visit. Neither was she able to contact a college representative, at the time, to voice her concerns. While the College received assurances that all images arising from this specific visit would be deleted, it was agreed that for any future visit of this type, clearer protocols are required. This has now been actioned by the College.

Complaint: Admissions/Progression
[Case Reference 15130 - Upheld]

The complainant indicated that a programme advertised on the website and accepting online applications, was no longer available. The college accepted that the course details provided on the website were ambiguous. These were subsequently revised, by the curriculum department and the complainant was offered a refund.

Complaint: Course Management
[Case reference 15055 - Upheld]

The College proposed to transfer programme provision from Greenock to Paisley and received communication that this would cause undue hardship for the complainant The college accepted that, for this particular course, there was insufficient pre course clarification provided about the location and duration of the course. Curriculum teams now provide clear guidance through a variety of processes (website, induction, on course guidance)to ensure that all students are clear about the length and location of courses.
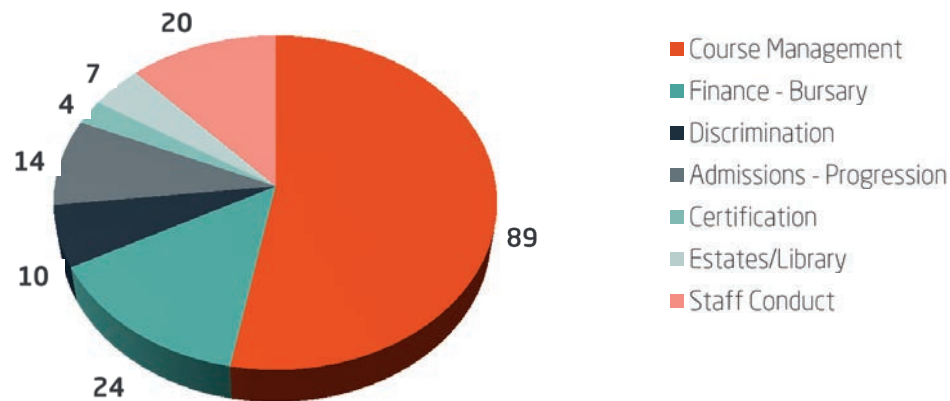
Complaint: Course Management
[Case References: 15123 and 15124 - not upheld]

These complaints were received in relation to the Graded Unit - a mandatory component of HN level courses. The complainants felt that there was an unnecessary delay in them receiving their graded unit result, which subsequently affected their ability to undertake remediation or resit activities for other units in the course. Investigation of the circumstances highlighted other significant factors had impacted on the delayed result (primarily that the results had been submitted to the awarding body for confirmation before being released to students) and neither complaint was upheld. The College accepted that the provision of information around the necessary internal quality assurances processes, was not fully explained to students. In session 2015/16 the College will work with the Student Association to ensure communications are improved.

Trends

What are people complaining about?

- Course Management
- Finance - Bursary
- Discrimination
- Admissions - Progression
- Certification
- Estates/Library
- Staff Conduct

Course Management	**89**
Finance - Bursary	**24**
Discrimination	**10**
Admissions - Progression	**14**
Certification	**4**
Estates/Library	**7**
Staff Conduct	**20**
Total	**168**

Where do our complaints come from?

- Current Student
- Former Student
- Business
- Parent/Carer
- Service User
- Anonymous
- Applicant
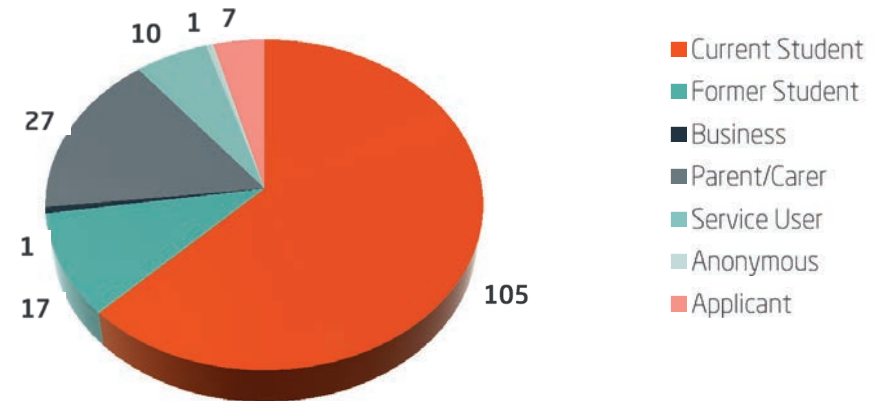
Current Student	**105**
Former Student	**17**
Business	**1**
Parent/Carer	**27**
Service User	**10**
Anonymous	**1**
Applicant	**7**
Total	**168**

Comparison between Complaint Categories

Legend: Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4

Categories: Course Management, Finance - Bursary, Discrimination, Exams/Certification, Estates & Library, Admissions/Progression, Staff Conduct
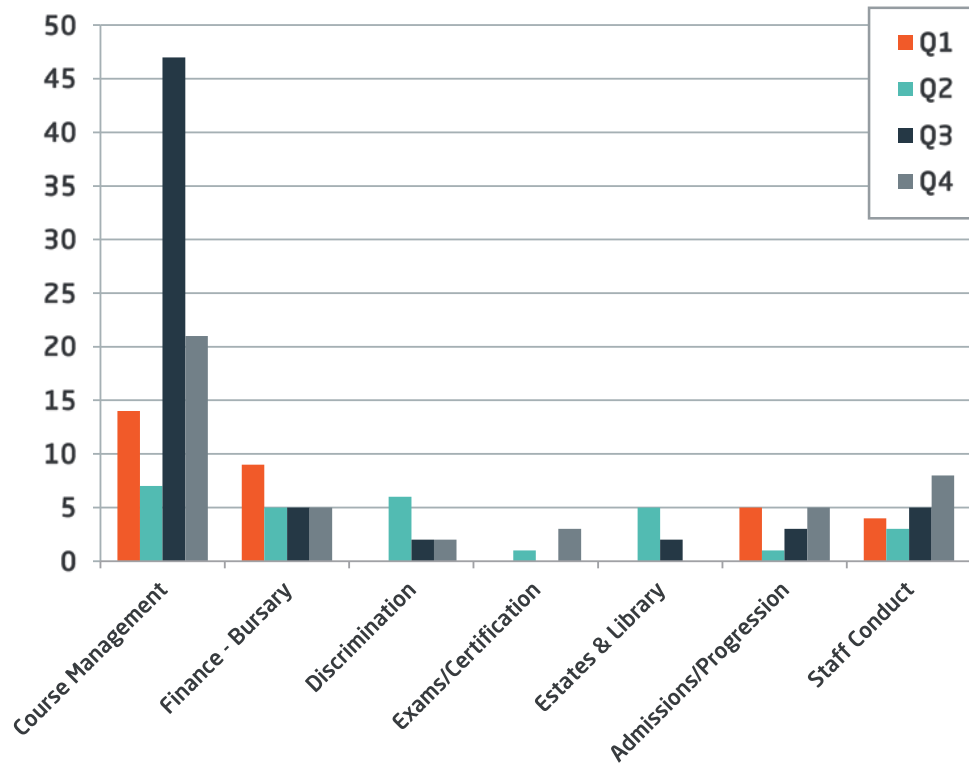
Comparison between Types of Complainants

Legend: Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4

Categories: Current Student, Former Student, Business, Parent/Carer, Service User, Anonymous, Applicant
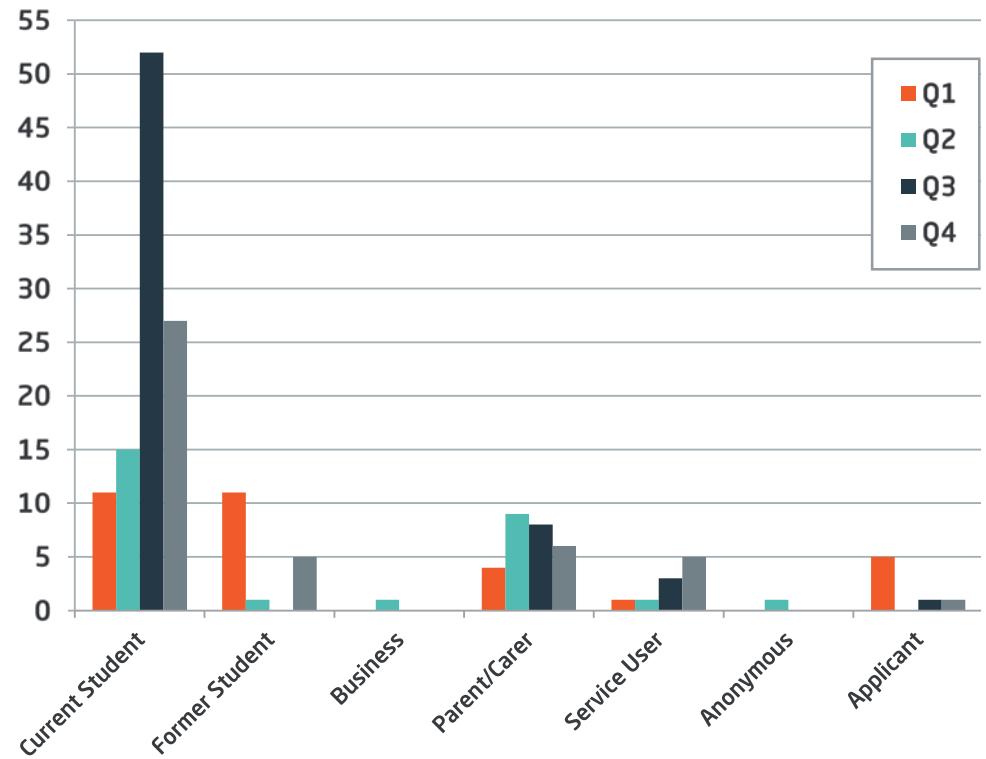
Table 1 below summarises all college data relating to complaints outcomes and decisions for the year 2015 - 2016, along with a comparative 2014-15 summary.

COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCEDURE INDICATORS	Q1		Q2		Q3		Q4		2015-16		2014-15	
1.0 Total number of complaints received & complaints received per 100 population												
1.1 Number of complaints Received		32		28		64		44		168		96
1.2/1a College Population and Number of Complaints received per 100 population	11234	0.3	14986	0.2	17364	0.4	18759	0.2	18759	0.9	27500	0.3
2.0 Number of complaints closed at each stage and as a % of all complaints closed												
2.1/2a Number of complaints closed at Stage 1 and % of total closed	11	34.4%	4	14.3%	43	67.2%	11	25.0%	69	41.1%	29	30.2%
2.2/2b Number of complaints closed at Stage 2 and % of total closed	20	62.5%	21	75.0%	17	26.6%	28	63.6%	86	51.2%	45	46.9%
2.3/2c 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	1	3.1%	3	10.7%	4	6.2%	5	11.4%	13	7.7%	22	22.9%
3.0 Number of complaints upheld, partially upheld and not upheld at each stage and as a % of complaints closed at that stage												
3.0 Stage 1												
3.1/3a Number and % of complaints upheld at Stage 1	6	54.5%	1	25.0%	2	4.7%	6	54.5%	15	21.7%	9	31.0%
3.3/3c Number and % of complaints not upheld at Stage 1	5	45.5%	3	75.0%	41	95.3%	5	45.5%	54	78.3%	20	69.0%
3.0 Stage2												
3.4/3d Number and % of complaints upheld at Stage 2	3	15.0%	2	9.5%	5	29.4%	8	28.6%	18	20.9%	15	33.3%
3.6/3f Number and % of complaints not upheld at Stage 2	17	85.0%	17	81.0%	12	70.6%	20	71.4%	66	76.7%	30	66.7%
3.0 Escalated												
3.7/3g Number and % of complaints upheld after Escalation	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
3.9/3i Number and % of complaints not upheld after Escalation	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
4.0 Total working days and average time in working days to close complaints at each stage												
4.1/4a Total working days and average time in working days to close complaints at Stage 1	33	3.0	10	2.5	79	1.8	33	3.0	155	2.2	111	3.8
4.2 Total working days and average time in working days to close complaints at Stage 2	399	19.9	410	19.5	196	11.5	401	14.3	1406	16.3	994	22.1
4b Total working days and average time in working days to close complaints after Escalation	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
5.0 Number and % of complaints closed within set timecales (S1=5 workings days; S2=20 working days ; Escalated = 20 working days)												
5.1/5a Number and % of Stage 1 complaints closed within 5 working days	11	34.4%	4	14.3%	43	67.2%	11	25.0%	69	41.1%	29	30.2%
5.2/5b Number and % of Stage 1 complaints not closed with 5 working days	1	3.1%	0	0.0%	4	6.3%	0	0.0%	5	3.0%	0	0.0%
5.3/5c Number and % of Stage 2 complaints closed within 20 working days	13	40.6%	14	50.0%	16	25.0%	23	52.3%	66	39.3%	45	46.9%
5.4/5d Number and % of Stage 2 complaints not closed within 20 working days	7	21.9%	10	35.7%	1	1.6%	10	22.7%	28	16.7%	22	22.9%
5.5/5e 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%
5.6/5f 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%
6.0 Number and % of complaints closed at each stage where extensions have been authorised												
6.1/6a Number and % of Stage 1 complaints closed within 10 working days (extension)	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
6.2/6b 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%
6.3/6c Number and % of Stage 2 complaints closed within 40 working days (extension)	6	85.7%	8	80.0%	1	100.0%	8	80.0%	23	82.1%	11	50.0%
6.4/6d Number and % of Stage 2 complaints not closed within 40 working days (extension)	1	14.3%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	3.6%	11	50.0%
6.5/6e Number and % of Escalated complaints closed within 40 working days (extension)	0	0.0%	2	20.0%	0	0.0%	2	20.0%	4	14.3%	0	0.0%
6.6/6f 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%

Table 2 below summarises all college data relating to time-scales for the resolution of complaints in 2015 - 2016, along with a comparative 2014-15 summary.

COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCEDURE INDICATORS		Q1		Q2		Q3		Q4		YTD		2013/14	
1.0	**Total number of complaints received & complaints received per 100 population**												
1.1	Complaints Received		32		28		64		44		168		96
1.2	College Population	11234	0.3	14986	0.2	17364	0.4	18759	0.2	17364	1.0	27500	0.3
2.0	**Number of complaints closed at Stage 1 and % of total closed**	17	50.0%	7	33.3%	3	12.0%	2	12.5%	29	30.2%	60	81.1%
2.1	Number of complaints closed at Stage 1 and % of total closed	11	34.4%	4	14.3%	43	67.2%	11	25.0%	69	41.1%	29	30.2%
2.2	Number of complaints closed at Stage 2 and % of total closed	20	62.5%	21	75.0%	17	26.6%	28	63.6%	86	51.2%	45	46.9%
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	1	3.1%	3	10.7%	4	6.2%	5	11.4%	13	7.7%	22	22.9%
3.0	**STAGE 1: Target timescales within 5 working days**	1	3.1%	3	10.7%	4	6.2%	5	11.4%	13	7.7%	22	22.9%
3.1	Number and % Stage 1 complaints upheld	6	54.5%	1	25.0%	2	4.7%	6	54.5%	15	21.7%	9	31.0%
3.2	Number and % Stage 1 complaints not upheld	5	45.5%	3	75.0%	41	95.3%	5	45.5%	54	78.3%	20	69.0%
3.3	Total working days and average time in working days to close complaints at Stage 1	33	3.0	10	2.5	79	1.8	33	3.0	155	2.2	111	3.8
3.4	Number and % Stage 1 complaints closed within 5 working days	6	54.5%	4	100.0%	43	100.0%	11	100.0%	64	92.8%	29	100.0%
3.5	Number and % Stage 1 complaints not closed within 5 working days	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
3.6	Number and % of Stage 1 complaints closed within 10 working days (extension)	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
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**									0			
4.1	Number and % Stage 2 complaints upheld	3	15.0%	2	9.5%	5	29.4%	8	28.6%	18	20.9%	15	33.3%
4.2	Number and % Stage 2 complaints not upheld	17	85.0%	19	90.5%	12	70.6%	20	71.4%	68	79.1%	30	66.7%
4.3	Total working days and average time in working days to close complaints at Stage 2	399	19.9	410	19.5	196	11.5	401	14.3	1406	16.3	994	22.1
4.4	Number and % Stage 2 complaints closed within 20 working days	13	65.0%	14	66.7%	15	88.2%	23	82.1%	65	75.6%	45	46.9%
4.5	Number and % Stage 2 complaints not closed within 20 working days	6	30.0%	6	28.6%	1	5.9%	3	10.7%	16	18.6%	29	30.2%
4.6	Number and % of Stage 2 complaints closed within 40 working days (extension)	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	5.9%	2	7.1%	3	3.5%	11	11.5%
4.7	Number and % of Stage 2 complaints not closed within 40 working days (extension)	1	5.0%	1	4.8%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2	2.3%	11	11.5%
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	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	This means those responded to at stage 1 (frontline resolution).
	This does not include those escalated from stage 1 to stage 2. These will be counted in the escalated complaints.
	This includes those where the extended timeline (i.e. + additional 5 working days) was used.
Stage 2	This means those responded to at stage 2 (investigation).
	This refers to those complaints considered directly at stage 2 for the following reasons:
	* 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)
	This includes those where the extended timeline (i.e. + additional 20 working days) was used.
Escalated	This means those escalated from stage 1 to stage 2.
	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.
	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.
Population	This figure will represent the total student population. For example the number of matriculated students at an agreed date.
CDN	College Development Network
SPSO	Scottish Public Sector Ombudsman