

Annual Complaints Handling

August

2024-July 2025

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**WEST COLLEGE
SCOTLAND**

Context

The College operates its complaints handling procedures in accordance with the procedure for public bodies administered by the [Scottish Public Sector Ombudsman](#) (SPSO). The college regards “expressions of dissatisfaction” as opportunities to review and amend our practices and recognise complaints as key elements of learner, and other stakeholder, feedback. This report is a summary of the complaints received, and actions taken for the academic session 2024-2025. Stage 1 refers to routine complaints usually dealt with and resolved within 5 working days. Stage 2 complaints are more complex and often require a degree of investigation to reach a resolution, with a target maximum closure date of 20 working days.

Performance Indicator 1: Total Number of Complaints received at Stages 1 & 2

Complainants	2021-2022	2022-23	2023-2024	2024-25
Stage 1	34	24	39	54
Stage 2	47	77	90	43
Total	81	101	129	97

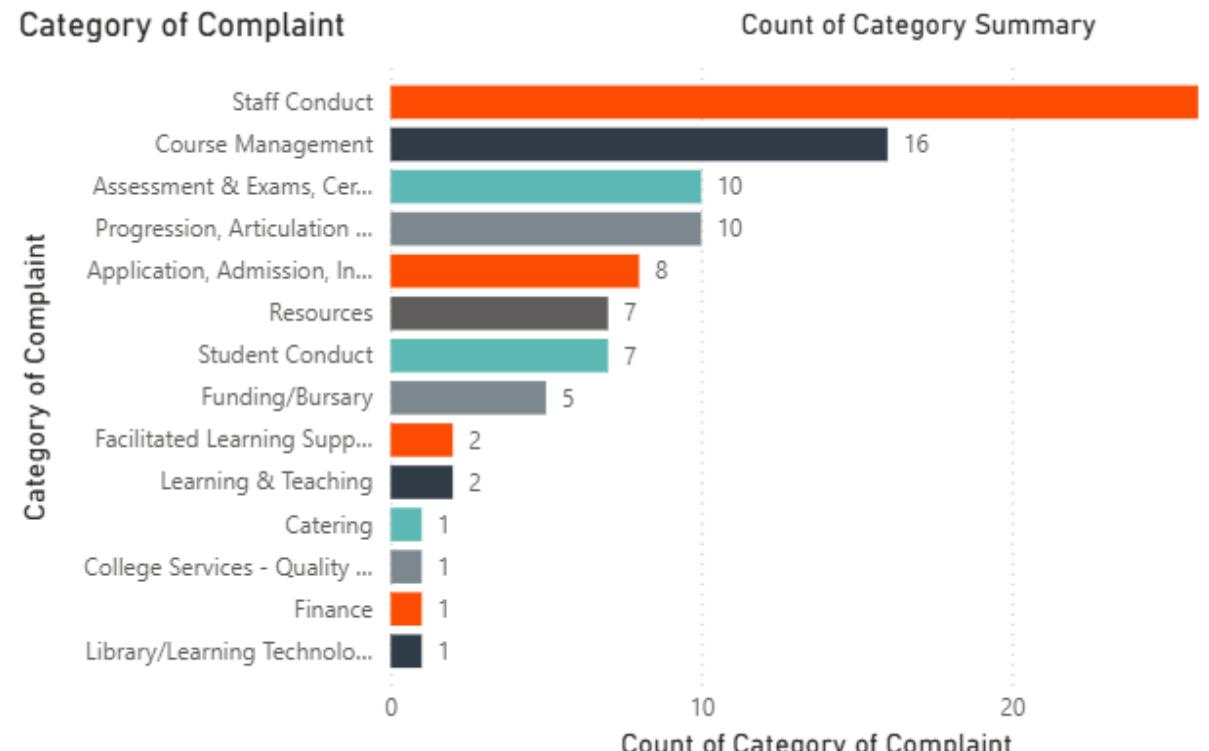


What do our stakeholders complain about?

Complaints are categorised in line with a national college sector agreement with the College Complaints Handling Advisory Group (CHAG) and the SPSO.

Our data highlights that most complaints received in 2024–25 were allocated under Staff Conduct (26). This continues the upward trend seen in previous sessions (Session 22–23 = 24, Session 21–22 = 30). The next most common categories were Course Management (16), Assessment & Exams / Certification (10), and Progression / Articulation (10).

Complaints about Staff Conduct varied in context but generally related to how stakeholders perceived they were treated by staff. Any staff member mentioned in a complaint is notified and offered appropriate support.



Performance Indicator 2: The number and percentage of complaints at each stage that were closed in full within the set timescales of five and 20 working days

Stage 1 closed within 5 working days	54	56%
Stage 2 closed within 20 working days	36	37%
Stage 2 closed after 20 working days	7	7%

Performance Indicator 3: The average time in working days for a full response to complaints at each stage

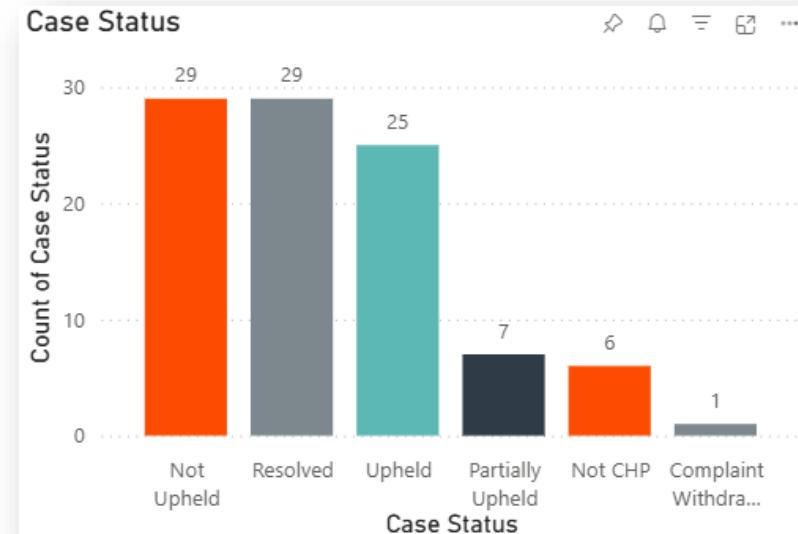
	WCS timeline	SPSO timeline
Stage 1	2.5 days	5 days
Stage 2	13 days	20 days
Stage 2 (after 20 working days)	31 days	NA



Performance Indicator 4: The Outcome of Complaints at each Stage

Complaint Outcome	Number of Stage 1 Complaints	Number of Stage 2 Complaints
Upheld	10	15
Partially Upheld	1	6
Not Upheld	10	19
Resolved	26	3
Not CHP	6	0

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 more appropriate.



Complaints By Stage	2022-23	2023-24	2024-2025
Total received	101	129	97
Met by Stage 1 (5 days)	24	38	54
Met by Stage 2 (20 days)	38	68	36
Outwith SPSO Set Timelines	39	23	7

Trends - We are making positive progress towards meeting SPSO timelines for closing off Stage 2 complaints mainly due to more efficient practices internally in following up complaints which have escalated to Stage 2.

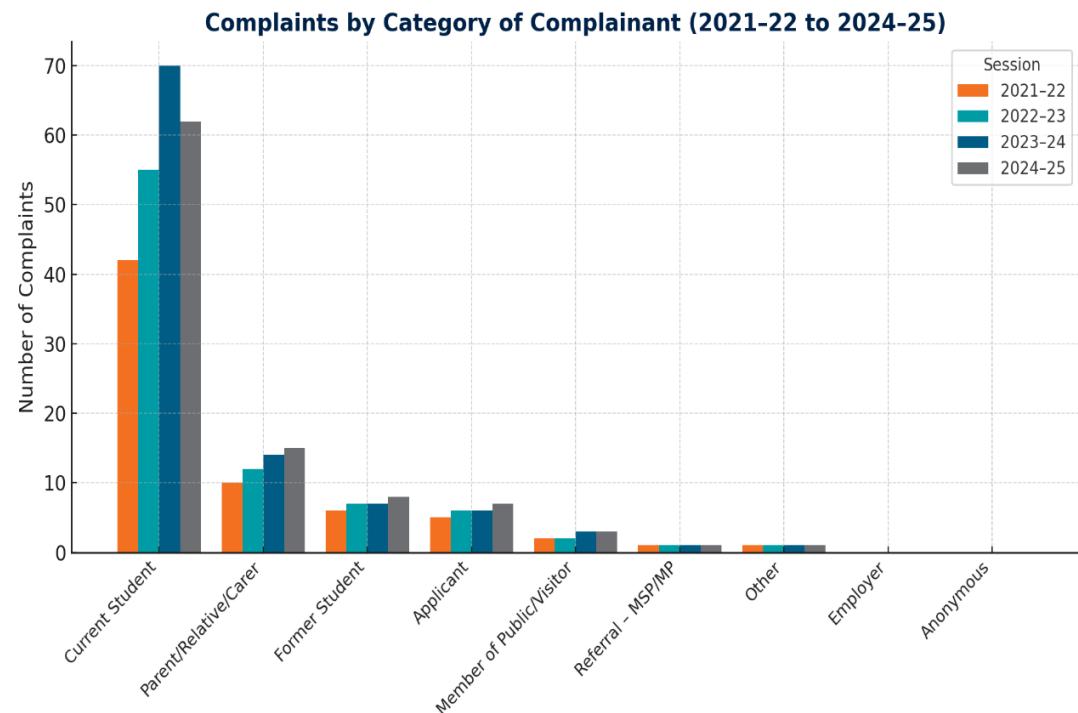


Who Complains?

Similar to previous years, most complaints in 2024–25 were submitted by current students (62), continuing the clear trend seen across recent sessions. This represents an increase of nearly 50% since Session 2021–22, highlighting a growing willingness among students to raise concerns and engage with the complaints process.

Other complainant categories included Parents/Relatives/Carers (15), Former Students (8), Applicants (7), and smaller numbers from Members of the Public/Visitors (3), Referrals from MSPs/MPs (1), and Other sources (1).

Overall, the distribution of complainant categories has remained consistent with previous years, with only a slight rise in complaints from Parents/Relatives/Carers, suggesting continued awareness and accessibility of the complaints process across all stakeholder groups.



Areas for continued improvement

- Reminder to all staff that complaints offer an opportunity to improve our services and should be directed through the college complaints handlers
- Improve timelines for resolving complex complaints
- Ensure all investigating managers have undertaken appropriate training for the role
- Training for all staff on complaints
- Guidance documents to be drafted on
 - o Complaints Handling Guidance and Support for Staff
 - o Guidance for Complaints Handlers

SPSO Referrals

The college had three complaints referred to the SPSO during session 2024-2025. The outcome of this referral was positive with no further action to be taken. SPSO determined that the College's response indicated that the matters had been handled appropriately and had followed our internal procedures.



Lessons Learned from Complaints

The College uses complaints to improve the quality of our service users' experience. Here are some examples of remedial actions taken because a complaint was raised.

Category of complaint	Main substance of the complaint	Remedial action taken
Staff Conduct	Customer care	Guidance given to staff on how to deal with students when payment for services cannot be made
Application, Admission, Interview, Enrolment, Induction	Applications, admission and enrolment	Complaints should be sent to the Quality Department as soon as they are received.

