



**Dumfries and
Galloway College**

One step ahead

ANNUAL COMPLAINTS HANDLING REPORT ACADEMIC YEAR 21-22

Performance Team

November 2022

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Annual Complaints Handling Report Academic Year 2021-2022

1. The Purpose of the Report

The purpose of the report is to provide a summary of our performance in handling complaints effectively, resolving complaints in a timely manner and identifying areas for improvement when our service is found to be below expectation.

2. Background to the Report

The College is required to comply with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman's (SPSO) Model Complaints Handling Procedure and report annually on its performance in handling complaints and also as part of our duties under Freedom of Information legislation.

This analysis includes statistics showing the volume and type of complaint as well as key performance details.

Complaint reporting

- 👉 **Quarterly Reports:** Prepared by Performance Team for the purpose of review by Senior Management. Reports published on the College Website.
- 👉 **Annual Report:** Prepared by Performance Team for the purpose of review by Senior Management, Executive Leadership Team and approved by the College Board of Management. Report published on the College Website.

Complaints received by Category and Complaint Outcomes

The College has adopted the standardised Complaint Categories developed by the College Development Network's Complaint Handling Advisory Group.

3. The Report

This report covers the period August 2021 to July 2022. In this period there were 17 frontline complaints (Stage 1*) and 13 complaints requiring a full investigation (Stage 2**). One complaint was escalated to Stage 2.

* complaints that are straightforward, requiring little or no investigation

** complaints that are complex, serious or 'high risk and where the customer is not satisfied with the frontline response

2021-2022 Performance Indicators 1 – 4

Indicator One: The total number of complaints received

1	Quantitative Indicator	2021-22	2020-21
1.1	Number of complaints received	30	20
1.2	Number of complaints received per 100 population as a %	0.65%	1.31%

Breakdown of Complaints		2021-22	2020-21
Stage 1	Number of complaints received	17	16
Stage 2	Number of complaints received	13	4
Stage 1	Number of complaints escalated to Stage 2	1	0

Breakdown of Complaint Categories		2021-22	2020-21
Stage 1			
Customer Care		3	4
Applications, Admission, Progression		3	4
Course Related		6	6
Services		5	2
Stage 2			
Customer Care		8	0
Applications, Admission, Interview, Enrolment		1	0
Course related		4	4
Escalated Complaint			
Course related		1	0

Breakdown of Complaints per Quarter		2021-22	2020-21
Stage 1			
Quarter 1 (August 21 – October 21)		5	6
Quarter 2 (November 21 – January 22)		3	2
Quarter 3 (February 22 – April 22)		7	5
Quarter 4 (May 22 – July 22)		2	3
Stage 1 Total Number of complaints received		17	16
Stage 2			
Quarter 1 (August 21 – October 21)		1	1
Quarter 2 (November 21 – January 22)		0	0
Quarter 3 (February 22 – April 22)		3	0
Quarter 4 (May 22 – July 22)		9	3
Stage 2 Number of complaints received		13	4
Stage 1 Number of complaints escalated to Stage 2			
Quarter 4 (May 22 – July 22)		1	0

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

2	Quantitative Indicator	21-22		20-21	
		No.	%	No.	%
2.1	Number of complaints closed in full at stage 1 within five working days as % of all stage 1 complaints responded to in full	12	71%	10	63%
2.2	The number of complaints closed in full at stage 2 within 20 working days as % of all stage 2 complaints responded to in full	6	43%	1	25%
2.3	The number of complaints closed in full after escalation within 20 working days as % of all complaints responded to in full after escalation.	0	0%	0	0%

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

Quantitative Indicator		Average time in working days 2021-2022	Average time in working days 2020-2021
3.1	Average time in working days to respond to complaints at stage 1	3.52	6.31
3.2	Average time in working days to respond to complaints at stage 2	29.38	39
3.3	Average time in working days to respond to complaints after escalation	29	0

Indicator Four: The outcome of complaints at each stage

	Quantitative Indicator	Upheld		Partially upheld		Not upheld		Resolved***	
		21-22	20-21	21-22	20-21	21-22	20-21	21-22	20-21
5.1	Number of complaints as a % of all complaints closed at stage 1 <i>1 complaint escalated to Stage 2</i>	8 (50%)	6 (38%)	1 (6%)	0 (0%)	2 (13%)	7 (44%)	5 (31%)	3 (19%)
5.2	Number of complaints as a % of all complaints closed at stage 2 *	7 (54%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (15%)	2 (50%)	4 (31%)	2 (50%)

5.3	Number of complaints as a % of all complaints closed after escalation	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
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***A complaint is resolved when both (the organisation) and the customer agree what action (if any) will be taken to provide full and final resolution for the customer, without making a decision about whether the complaint is upheld or not upheld

Learning from Complaints: Service Delivery Improvements

By recording and analysing complaints data we can identify and address the causes of complaints and, where appropriate, identify training opportunities and introduce service improvements.

Following complaints received in Academic Year 2021-22, service delivery will be improved in the following areas:

Complaints Handling - Complainant feedback

As many complainants did not respond to the monitoring email issued by the Performance Team, for Session 22-23 a feedback survey (via Microsoft Forms platform) has been devised. This will allow the team to easily produce quantitative data for several outcomes– access to the CHP, prompt acknowledgement of complaint, the way in which they were treated by staff, friendliness, courtesy etc, timescales for handling complaints. This process will be reviewed at the end of academic session 2022-23. However, it is anticipated that complainants will find this approach to providing feedback much easier and encourage each complainant to respond.

Complaints Handling – Staff Training

A LearnNet Complaints unit is being developed and all staff will be required to complete this either as new training or as a refresher. It is anticipated that this training will raise awareness of the complaints handling process and in particular the requirement to adhere to the timescales for actioning complaints and ensure compliance with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman performance indicators. If this proves to be successful, all staff will be required to undertake this training each session.

Customer satisfaction with complaints process

To ensure compliance with the College Complaints Handling Procedure we requested feedback from complainants regarding their satisfaction with the service they received, and not the circumstances or outcome of their actual complaint. They were asked to evaluate the service considering the following points:

- 👉 Whether the complaints process was easy to access
- 👉 Whether they received a prompt acknowledgement of their complaint
- 👉 Whether their complaint was thoroughly investigated
- 👉 Whether they received a fair and clear response and within an appropriate timescale
- 👉 Whether they were dealt with courteously at all times

Following the issue of the monitoring email, a very low number of complainants responded. However, the feedback did indicate that they were satisfied with how their complaint had been dealt with (17%).

Key Observations

Number of complaints received

On comparison to session 20-21, the number of Stage 2 complaints received increased significantly (from 4 to 13). There is no data to indicate the reason for the increase. However, the comments received are all isolated comments that do not pertain to any one key area or team within the college. The number of Stage 1 complaints were comparable (16 for 20-21 and 17 for 21-22).

The number and percentage of complaints at each stage which were closed in full within the set timescales of 5 and 20 working days

An improvement of 8% for Stage 1 complaints is noted (71% for 21-22 compared to 63% for 20-21).

For stage 2 complaints there were various factors which impacted on the adherence to the 20 working day timescale. These included complaints received during the summer break when key staff were on annual leave, and complexity of complaints which required lengthy communication with the complainants. However, for Stage 2 complaints an improvement of 18% was noted (43% for 21-22 compared to 25% for 20-21).

The average time in working days for a full response to complaints at each stage

In accordance with the Complaints Handling Procedure the target for resolution of Stage 1 complaints is 5 days and Stage 2 complaints is 20 days.

In 2021-22 the average time in working days to close a Stage 1 complaint was 3.52 days (6.31 days in 20-21). This is an improvement of 2.79 days per stage 1 complaint.

In 2021-22 the average days to close a Stage 2 was 29.38 days (39 days in 20-21). This is an improvement of 9.62 days per stage 2 complaint.

A proportion of the complaints (50%) received during Quarter 4 (May 22 – July 22) were received during the summer break when many key staff were on annual leave. Extensions were allocated (in agreement with the complainant) to allow additional time for actioning /investigating complaints.

SPSO (Scottish Public Services Ombudsman)

No complaints relating to Dumfries and Galloway College were submitted to SPSO during Academic Session 2021-2022.

The Performance Team, November 2022