

## **Annual Complaints Report 2023-24**

### **Introduction**

Complaints are received all year round from several different sources although the primary source tends to be from students. Complaints are received via a variety of mechanisms including direct emails, complaints forms and the Red Button. UHI Inverness uses the SPSO categories and sub-categories to classify complaints. The outcomes from complaint resolution are reported to UHI (HE) and published on the UHI Inverness website (FE).

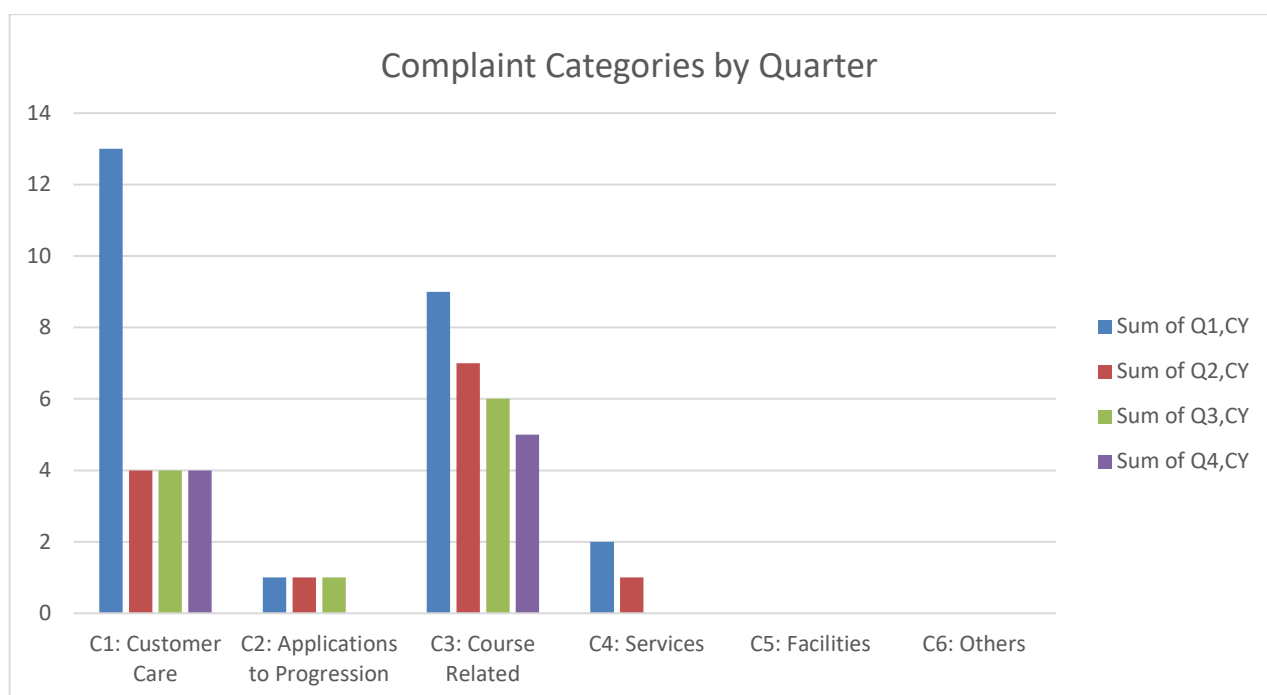
Complaints are grouped into quarters depending on the time of year in which they are received. The quarter dates are detailed below:

- Quarter 1 (Q1): August – end of October,
- Quarter 2 (Q2): November – end of January,
- Quarter 3 (Q3): February – end of April,
- Quarter 4 (Q4): May – end of July.

This report provides an overview of the complaint categories and outcomes across academic year 2023-24 (Q1 – Q4) including Q4 statistics.

### **Complaints by Category**

The graphs below display the sum of quarterly complaints received for each category.



Customer Category: Current Year (Quarter) 2023/24	YTD CY	Q1,CY	Q2,CY	Q3,CY	Q4,CY
C1: Customer Care	25	13	4	4	4
C2: Applications to Progression	3	1	1	1	0
C3: Course Related	27	9	7	6	5
C4: Services	3	2	1	0	0
C5: Facilities	0	0	0	0	0
C6: Others	0	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>9</b>

Customer Category: Previous Year (Quarter) 2022/23	YTD PY	Q1,PY	Q2,PY	Q3,PY	Q4,PY
C1: Customer Care	10	2	1	4	3
C2: Applications to Progression	5	1	1	1	2
C3: Course Related	20	7	3	8	2
C4: Services	8	2	1	3	2
C5: Facilities	19	6	7	5	1
C6: Others	2	0	1	1	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>10</b>

In 2023-24 there was a 10% decrease in complaints compared to 2022-23, which also saw a 11% decrease in complaints received in 2021-22.

## Complaints by Mode of Delivery

In 2023-24 (Q1-Q4), 28% of complaints were submitted by FE students, 43% by HE and 29% by Members of Public, Stakeholders and Other.

The table below provides a breakdown for 2022-23 and 2023-24.

FE / HE	No. Received 22/23	No. Received 23/24
FE	21	16
HE	28	25
Members of Public/Other	15	17
<b>Total</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>58</b>

## Complaint Outcomes

The table below shows the breakdown in stage 1 and stage 2 complaints in 2023-24 (Q1-Q4) and whether they have been resolved, upheld, partially upheld, not upheld or other outcome.

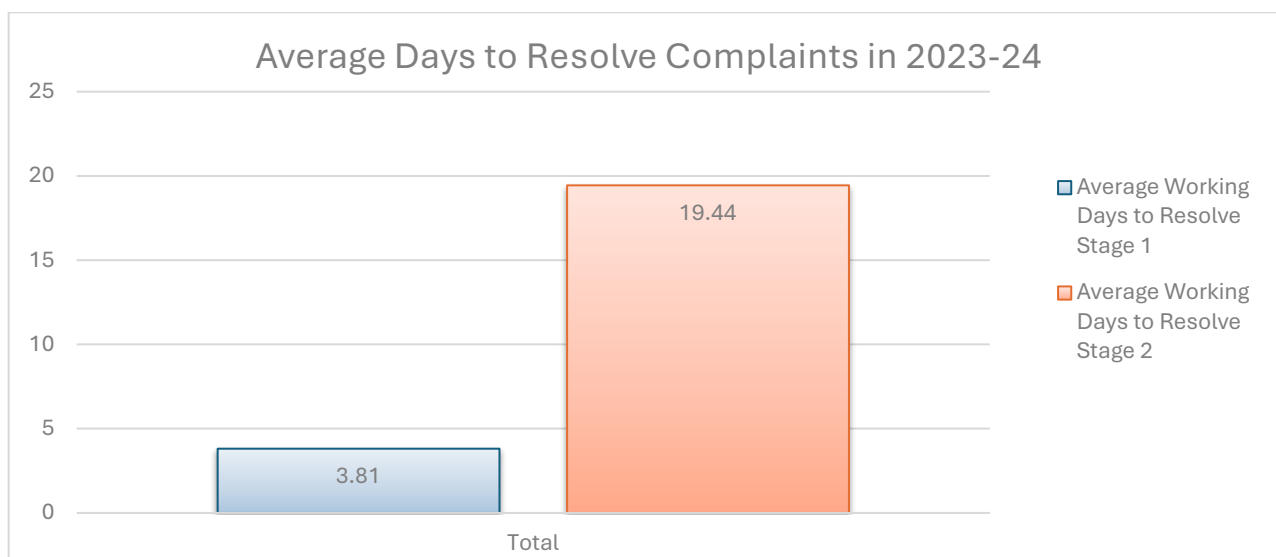
- Resolved – 34.5%
- Not upheld – 8.6%
- Partially upheld – 27.6%
- Upheld – 24.1%
- Other – 5.1%

Outcome	Stage 1	Stage 2	Total
Resolved	19 (57% of St 1) <i>FE: 3, HE: 9, MoP/Other: 7.</i>	1 (4% of St 2) <i>HE: 1</i>	20 <i>FE: 3, HE: 10, MoP/Other: 7.</i>
Not upheld	3 (9% of St 1) <i>FE: 2, MoP: 1</i>	2 (8% of St 2) <i>MoP: 2</i>	5 <i>FE: 2, MoP: 3.</i>
Partially upheld	5 (15% of St 1) <i>FE: 2, HE: 2, MoP: 1</i>	11 (44% of St 2) <i>FE: 4, HE: 4, MoP: 3</i>	16 <i>FE: 6, HE: 6, MoP: 4.</i>
Upheld	3 (19% of St 1) <i>FE: 2, HE: 1, .</i>	11 (44% of St 2) <i>FE: 4, HE: 6. Other: 1</i>	14 <i>FE: 6, HE: 7, Other: 2</i>
Withdrawn	0	0	0
Still under Investigation	0	0	0
Not Investigated*	3 (9% of St 1) <i>FE: 1, MoP: 2</i>	.	3 <i>FE: 3.</i>
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>58</b>

## Complaint Timescales

SPSO guidelines state pre-defined timescales of a 5 working day turnaround for Stage 1. An extension of 5 working days is permissible for stage 1 complaints subject to approval from the Quality Manager to complete an investigation but where escalation to a stage 2 is not required. For a Stage 2 complaint the timeframe for completion is 20 working days. As part of the Stage 2 process, where the complaint is complex and may take longer than 20 working days, an extension can be authorised by the Quality Manager, should this happen updates must be provided to complainants.

The chart below displays the average number of days taken to resolve complaints in 2023-24 (Q1-Q4).



The average number of working days to resolve a complaint after escalation from Stage 1 to Stage 2 was 18 days. The one escalated complaint was upheld (100%).

## Complaint Follow Up Survey

Within 6 weeks of receiving the complaint outcome, complainants (unless the complaint was received anonymously) are sent a link to a short survey asking them for feedback on their experience of the complaints process and to rate their satisfaction levels against thirteen aspects of the process. The survey is anonymous unless the complainant chooses to identify themselves.

Six responses were received in 2023-24. The outcomes from this small sample are summarised below:

- 4 complainants (66%) were not aware of the complaints process prior to submitting a complaint.
- 4 complainants (66%) found the complaints process easy to access.
- 2 complainants (33%) found the complaint form easy to use.

- 1 complainant (16%) agreed they were able to obtain assistance in making the complaint
- 5 complainants (83%) felt they received a prompt acknowledgement of their complaint.
- 4 complainants (66%) felt their complaint was taken seriously.
- 3 complainants (50%) agreed that their complaint was thoroughly investigated, 2 complaints (34%) did not and there was 1 no response.
- 3 complainants (50%) felt they were not kept informed during the process of the investigation.
- 3 complainants (50%) felt they did not receive a fair and objective response to their complaint.
- 2 complainants (33%) felt they did not receive a clear response to their complaint.
- 3 complainants (50%) felt they received a response within the appropriate timescale.
- 5 complainants (83%) felt they were dealt with courteously.
- 3 complainants (50%) did not feel that the complaint was closed off satisfactorily.

Three (anonymous) text comments were submitted, these were expressions of dissatisfaction at their complaint outcome, and that their complaint was not taken seriously.

## Learning from Complaints

Complaints often result in reviews of processes and procedures, and they also allow us to identify opportunities for staff development. The Quality team continues to identify any learning points from each complaint in order to identify themes emerging. Programme and support teams use complaints as part of their evidence bank to inform their evaluative activities aimed at improving the student experience.

Below are examples of actions taken as a result of complaints received during 2023-24:

- The Bothy has provided guidance on how to turn notifications off. The complainant has been put in touch with the learning technologist to resolve the issue.
- Meeting arranged between a complainant and funding team to explain application process and resolve the complaint.
- A class were reminded of the Student Code of Conduct by their lecturer and the consequences of breaching it. This action occurred on two occasions following separate complaints.
- Lecturer and PDA spoke with a class to reinforce the National Care Standards around confidentiality and reminded students of the Student Code of Conduct.
- Student disciplinary informal stage implemented as a result of a complaint.
- A delivery team have built in remediation for the first 3 weeks of semester 2 in 2024 to ensure all course content is fully covered, following operational issues (staff resignation) in Semester 1.
- Students to be notified a minimum of 1 hour ahead of their class start time, if their attendance on campus is not required to avoid unnecessary travel cost and time.
- Staff have completed a Customer Service training course following an anonymous complaint regarding staff.
- Clear communications on Mitigating Circumstances dates required. Raised with UHI.

- Department head is undertaking a review of PLSP process to identify process improvement to ensure the correct sharing of information in a timely manner. As an interim measure additional manual actions are being implemented by the Wellbeing & Support team to mitigate against students with an existing PLSP's not having that rolled forward as they progress.
- Quality team have created templates for capturing actions & key details from complaint meetings - ensure this is distributed via email to all attendees.
- Enrolment Open Day for continuing apprentices to be put in place to assist with resolving the issue of non-enrolled students not showing on resulting registers.
- Department asked to review outstanding results with the relevant member of the Student Records Team. Training given on the Resulting Dashboard to assist in identifying where results are missing.

## Further Information

Further information on the complaint handling process can be found here: [About us - Complaints handling \(uhi.ac.uk\)](https://uhi.ac.uk/about-us/complaints-handling) or by contacting [quality.ic@uhi.ac.uk](mailto:quality.ic@uhi.ac.uk)

FE Quarterly and Year End reports can be found here: [Complaints handling - Complaints Handling Reports \(uhi.ac.uk\)](https://uhi.ac.uk/complaints-handling-reports)

The link to SPSO is here: [We are Scotland's Ombudsman | SPSO](https://www.scotland.gov.uk/about-us/we-are-scotland-s-ombudsman)