

Annual Report 2024-25

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).

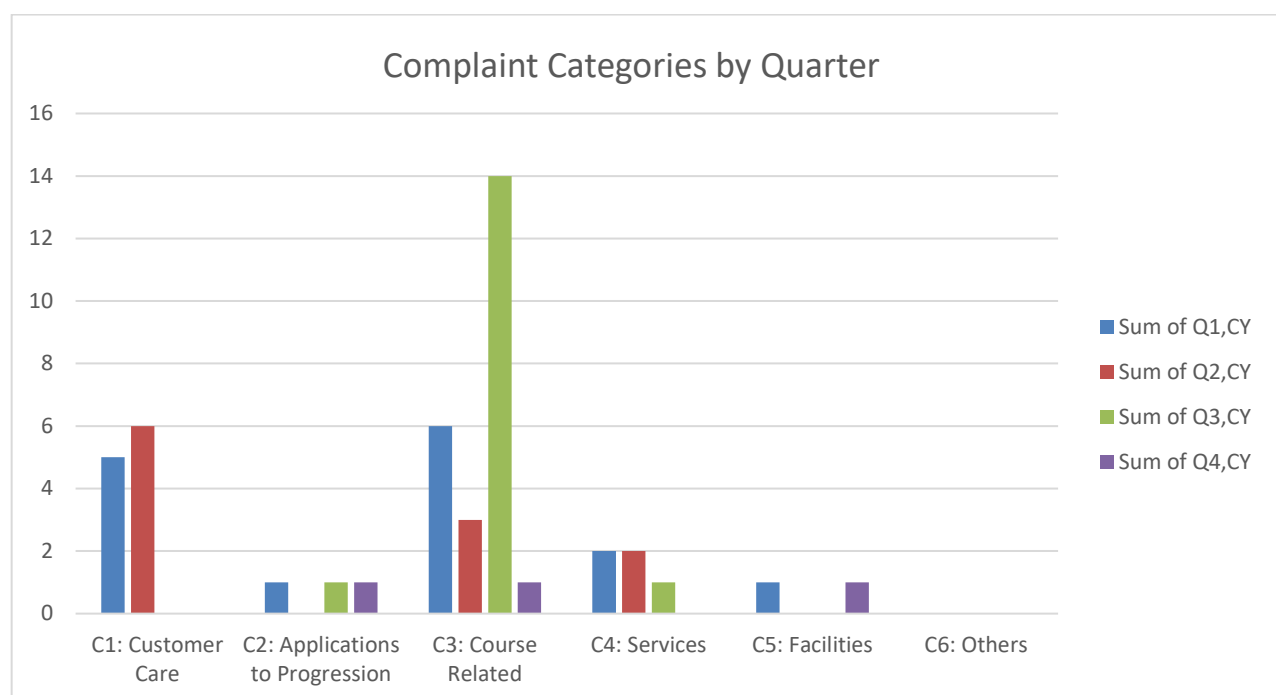
Complaints are grouped into quarters depending on the time of year in which they are received. The quarter dates are detailed below:

- 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 2024-25 (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) | YTD CY | Q1,CY | Q2,CY | Q3,CY | Q4,CY |
|--|-------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| C1: Customer Care | 11 | 5 | 6 | 0 | 0 |
| C2: Applications to Progression | 3 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| C3: Course Related | 24 | 6 | 3 | 14 | 1 |
| C4: Services | 5 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| C5: Facilities | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| C6: Others | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| TOTAL | 45 | 15 | 11 | 16 | 3 |

| Customer Category: Previous Year (Quarter) | YTD | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 |
|---|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 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 |
| TOTAL | 58 | 25 | 13 | 11 | 9 |

A total of 3 complaints were received in Q4, compared to 9 in the same quarter last year.

Applications to Progression, Course Related and Facilities all received one complaint in Q4. All other categories received nil complaints.

In 2024-25 there was a decline in the number of complaints compared to 2023-24.

The category of 'Course Related' received the most complaints this year, of which 41% were within the 'Course Management' subcategory. These related to changes in course structure, the withdrawal of a programme, class cancellation.

The category of 'Customer Care' received the second most complaints in 2024-25 with the subcategory of 'Staff Conduct' accounting for 55% of these. These largely concerned the manner in which students were spoken to in the classroom and around the campus.

The table below shows the full breakdown of complaint categories and sub-categories, including the year-to-year shift.

| Customer Category CY YTD vs PY YTD | 2024-25 | 2023-24 | Change |
|--|-----------|-----------|------------|
| C1: Customer Care | 11 | 25 | -14 |
| C1S01: Health&Safety | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| C1S02: Security | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| C1S03: Diversity&Equality | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| C1S04: Data Protection | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| C1S05: Environmental | 0 | 1 | -1 |
| C1S06: Staff Conduct | 6 | 16 | -10 |
| C1S07: Student Conduct | 1 | 4 | -3 |
| C1S99: Other | 3 | 4 | -1 |
| C2: Applications to Progression | 3 | 3 | 0 |
| C2S01: Marketing | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| C2S02: Application, Admission, Interview, Enrolment, Induction | 3 | 1 | 2 |
| C2S03: Progression, Articulation, Withdrawal | 0 | 1 | -1 |
| C2S99:Other | 0 | 1 | -1 |
| C3: Course Related | 24 | 27 | -3 |
| C3S01: Learning & Teaching | 3 | 6 | -3 |
| C3S02: Environment/Resources | 3 | 0 | 3 |
| C3S03: Course Management | 10 | 4 | 6 |
| C3S04: Facilitated Learning & Support | 3 | 3 | 0 |
| C3S05: Assessment, Exams & Certification | 3 | 11 | -8 |
| C3S99: Other | 2 | 3 | -1 |
| C4: Services | 5 | 3 | 2 |
| C4S01: Finance | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| C4S02: Funding / Bursary | 3 | 1 | 2 |
| C4S03: Student Records | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| C4S04: Providing Learning Support | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| C4S05: Library / Learning Technology | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| C4S06: Quality etc. | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| C4S99: Other | 1 | 2 | -1 |
| C5: Facilities | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| C5S01: Catering | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| C5S02: Student Accommodation | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| C5S03: Maintenance, Lifts, Car Parking | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| C5S99: Other | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| C6: Others | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| C6S01: Others | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| C6S99: | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| TOTAL | 45 | 58 | -13 |

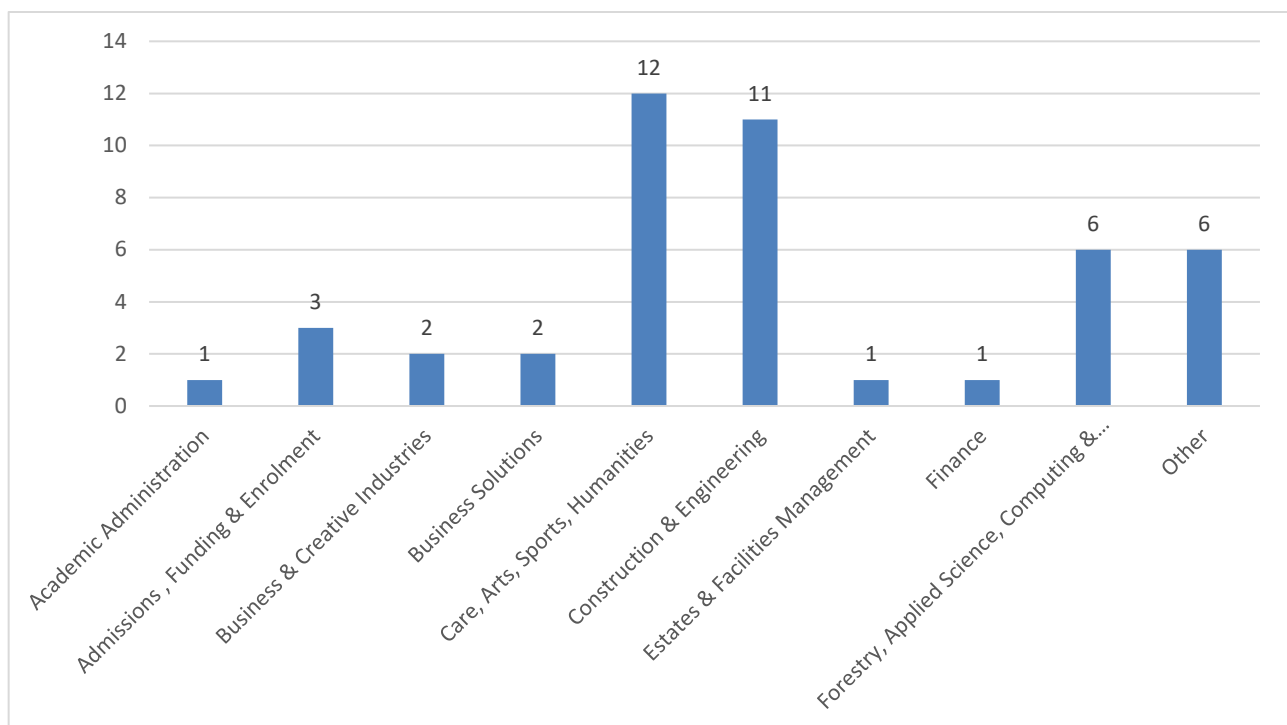
Complaints by Department

The graph below displays the number of complaints received by department throughout academic year 2024-25.

CASH received the greatest number of complaints, with 12 in total. This was a decrease from the previous year, when 24 complaints were received in this area. The complaints related to the category of course management, across several individual issues.

Construction and Engineering received the second most complaints by department, split across the course related, customer care and application to progress categories. The majority related to course management, and again the issues covered a range of individual topics.

Those complaints categorised in the 'Other' department also cover a range of issues, and cannot easily be attached to a single area or department.



Complaint Outcomes

In Q4, 2 complaints were 'Not Upheld', and one was escalated to Stage 2.

| Outcome | Stage 1 | Stage 2 | Total |
|---------------------------|---------|---------|-------|
| Not upheld | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Partially upheld | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Upheld | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Still under investigation | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Escalated to Stage 2 | 1 | | 1 |
| Resolved | 0 | 0 | 0 |

The table below shows the breakdown in stage 1 and stage 2 complaints in 2024-25 (Q1-Q4) and whether they have been resolved, upheld, partially upheld, not upheld or other outcome.

- Resolved – 28.8%
- Not upheld – 13.3%
- Partially upheld – 26.6%
- Upheld – 28.8%
- Escalated to Stage 2 – 2.2%

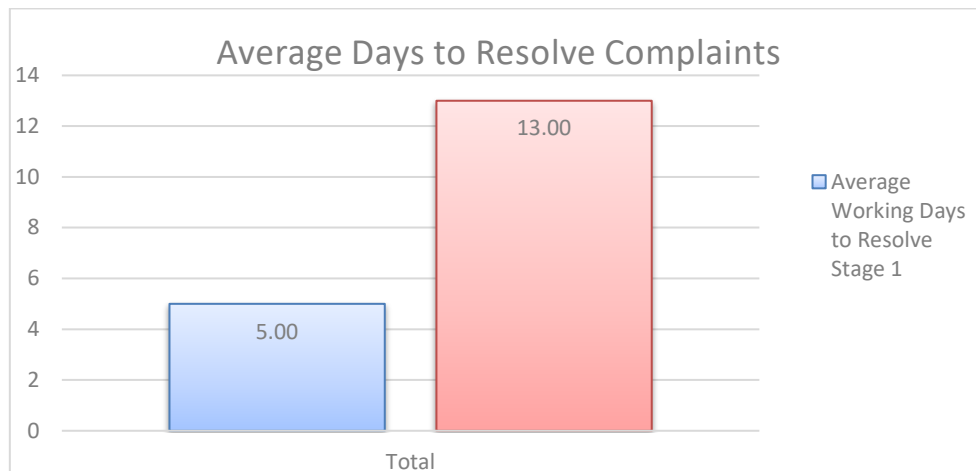
| Outcome | Stage 1 | Stage 2 | Total |
|---------------------------|---------|---------|-------|
| Not upheld | 2 | 4 | 6 |
| Partially upheld | 7 | 5 | 12 |
| Still under investigation | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Upheld | 7 | 6 | 13 |
| Escalated to Stage 2 | 1 | | 1 |
| Resolved | 13 | | 13 |

In 2024-25 the number of complaints that were 'Resolved' decreased to 29% from 34% the previous year. The percentage of 'Not Upheld' outcomes increased to 13% from 9% the previous year. The percentage of 'Upheld' outcomes increased from 24.1% last year to 28.8% this year. The 'Partially Upheld' outcomes stayed about the same at 26.6%.

Complaint Timescales

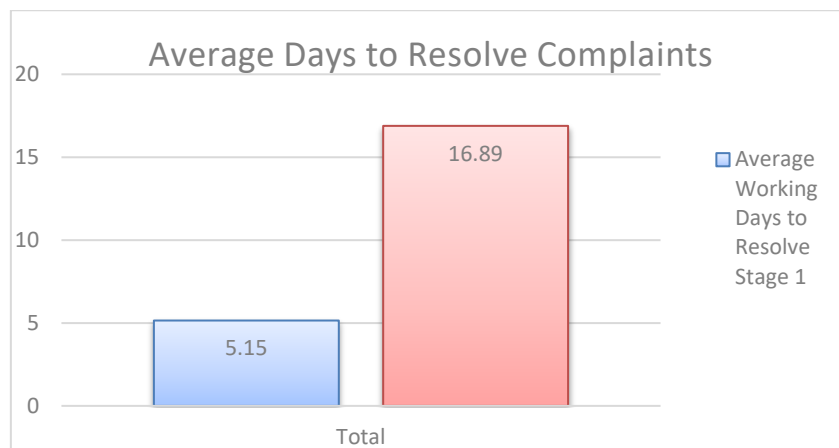
SPSO guidelines state pre-defined timescales of a 5 working day turnaround for Stage 1. An extension of 5 working days is permissible for stage 1 complaints subject to approval from the Quality Manager to complete an investigation but where escalation to a stage 2 is not required. For a Stage 2 complaint 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 above displays the average number of days taken to resolve complaints in Q4. The range of days taken to resolve Stage 1 complaints in Q4 is 5 days. The range of days taken to resolve Stage 2 complaints in Q4 is 13 days.

The chart below displays the average number of days taken to resolve complaints in 2024-25 (Q1-Q4).



The range of days taken to resolve Stage 1 complaints in 2023-24 is between 1 – 15 days.

21 complaints (72%) were completed within the required 5 days. Staff availability, multiple individuals involved, and the level of complexity were the reasons for exceeding the 5 working day timeframe for the remaining 8 complaints.

The range of days taken to resolve Stage 2 complaints in 2024-25 is between 8 - 30 days. 15 complaints (88%) were completed within the required 20 days. Two Stage 2 complaints exceeded the 20-day timeframe, and the complainant received notification of the delay.

The delays were the result of the complexity of the complaints and the availability of staff over the summer break.

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.

Eight responses were received in 2024-25. The outcomes from this small sample are summarised below:

- 5 complainants (62%) were not aware of the complaints process prior to submitting a complaint.
- 5 complainants (72%) found the complaints process easy to access.
- 5 complainants (62%) found the complaint form easy to use.
- 5 complainant (62%) agreed they were able to obtain assistance in making the complaint
- 7 complainants (88%) felt they received a prompt acknowledgement of their complaint.
- 5 complainants (62%) felt their complaint was taken seriously.
- 3 complainants (38%) agreed that their complaint was thoroughly investigated, 3 complaints (62%) did not and there was 1 no response.
- All complainants (100%) 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.
- 5 complainants (62%) felt they did not receive a clear response to their complaint.
- All complainants (100%) felt they received a response within the appropriate timescale.
- 6 complainants (75%) felt they were dealt with courteously.
- 4 complainants (50%) felt 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 2024-25:

- The Bothy is to provide guidance on how to turn notifications off. The complainant has been put in touch with the learning technologist to resolve the issue.
- Summary findings from a complaint outcome are to be added to the agenda for NC Art & Design CCM.
- Meeting undertaken between complainant and funding team to explain application process and resolve complaint.
- A class were reminded of the Student Code of Conduct by their lecturer and the consequences of breaching it.
- Lecturer and PDA spoke with the class to reinforce the National Care Standards around confidentiality and made aware of Student Code of Conduct.
- Student disciplinary informal stage implemented as a result of a complaint.
- The UHI student code of conduct was discuss with a class, led by the PDA to address issues raised in a complaint.
- 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 Sem 1.
- Review of formatting of PLSPs and communications to staff around PLSPs
- Course team looking at identifying achievable changes to reduce complexities within the course structure and presentation.
- 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.
- Clear communications on Mitigating Circumstances dates
- Anonymous complaint regarding unprofessionalism of staff. This was raised with the department manager to resolve with team, Staff have completed a Customer Service training course.
- Following concerns being raised regarding staff conduct, HR are monitoring the specific situation and providing support to the staff member.
- PLSP not been followed, the systems in place are not suitable as there is no way to check who the PLSP has been sent to. Senior UHI Inverness staff are speaking to EO to resolve as this relates to HE students particularly.
- Quality team to create template for capturing actions & key details from complaint meetings - ensure this is distributed via email to all attendees. Actions ongoing.

Themes emerging from complaints through the academic year 2024-25:

22.2% complaints received this year were related to course management. These complaints were largely around the late communications received in relation to their chosen programme, including the withdraw of a programme, or late notification of class changes.

There has been a clear reduction in the number of complaints directed at individual members of staff from the previous academic year, although this category remains one of the highest. The primary type of complaint is the manner in which staff are communicating with students, for example, rudeness, inappropriate level of challenge.

Raising Awareness of Complaints Process

Students are made aware of the complaints handling process during induction week and can be advised by college staff how to submit a complaint if required. Students also have support from the HISA advocacy service should they choose to use it. The complaints process is available on the UHI Inverness website and can be accessed via the Red Button tile on MyDay.

External stakeholders can access the complaint process via the college website or by contacting the college directly.