

Complaints Handling Procedure Annual Report 2023-2024

Complaints Resolution Office

Introduction and overview

The University is committed to providing an excellent educational experience for our students and high-quality services to all other service users of the University.

The University's Complaints Handling Procedure is based on the Model Complaints Handling Procedure (MCHP) for Higher Education issued by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO). We value complaints and use information from them to help us improve our services. A complaint as defined by the SPSO is any expression of dissatisfaction about our action or lack of action, or about the standard of service (this includes delivery of learning and teaching activities) provided by or on behalf of the University.

The CHP involves two internal stages: Stage 1 (Frontline) to be handled within 5 working days (exceptionally 10); and Stage 2 (Investigation) to be handled within 20 working days. Following stages 1 and 2, if a complainant remains dissatisfied, they have the option to take their complaint to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) for consideration. Full details of the CHP can be accessed at <https://www.gla.ac.uk/connect/complaints/chp/>

This annual report contains key performance indicators for complaints considered through the University's Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP) between 1 August 2023 and 31 July 2024¹

Total number of complaints received

The number of complaints received at Stage 1, the number escalated from Stage 1 to Stage 2, and the number of complaints received directly at Stage 2.

This data also indicates the number of issues raised that cannot be handled through the CHP. Complainants are advised as soon as possible if their complaint cannot be considered through the CHP.

Total number of incidents received		721				
Incidents not concluded through the CHP	Request for service and/or information ²	309				
	Referred to another procedure	65				
	Complaint withdrawn	13				
	Not CHP	15				
	Out of time	5				
Incidents concluded through CHP			Stage 1	Stage 2 Overall	Escalated to Stage 2	Direct to Stage 2
		314	254	60	20	40

¹ Note: This data is accurate as of 12 November 2024

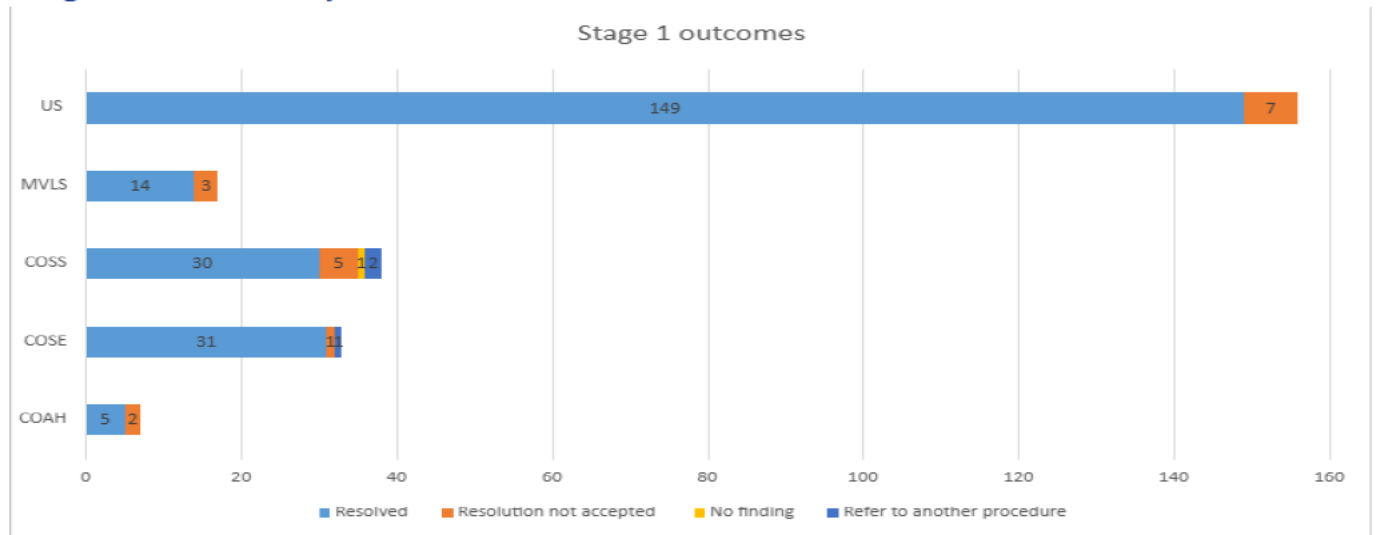
² If someone asks the University to do something (for example, provide a service or deal with a problem), and this is the first time they have contacted us, this would normally be a routine service request and not a complaint

The outcome of complaints at each stage

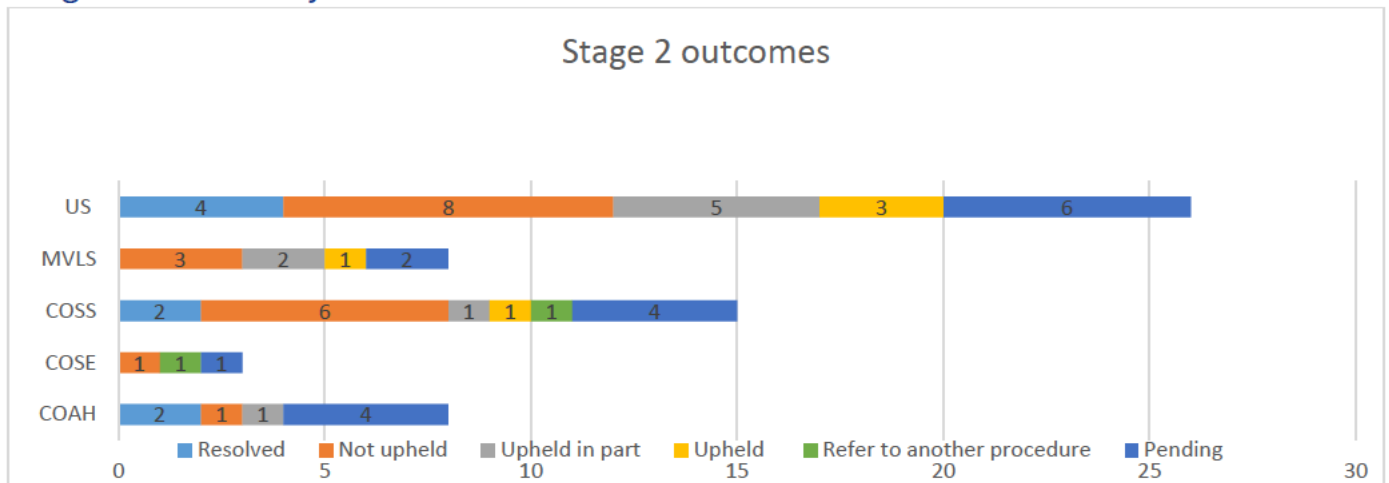
SPSO KPI2: An overview of the outcome of complaints, by percentage³

Outcome	Stage 1 (%)	Stage 2 overall (%)	Escalated to S2 (%)	Direct to S2 (%)
Withdrawn	3.9%	5.0%	4.5%	5.3%
Out of Time	2.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Not CHP	2.4%	15.0%	13.6%	15.8%
Resolution /Remedy	90.2%	13.3%	15.0%	12.5%
Resolution not accepted	7.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Not upheld	0.0%	31.7%	36.4%	28.9%
Upheld in part	0.0%	15.0%	22.7%	10.5%
Upheld	0.0%	8.3%	4.5%	10.5%
Presumed resolved	1.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
No finding	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Pending	0.0%	28.3%	9.1%	39.5%
Refer to another procedure	1.2%	3.3%	4.5%	2.6%

Stage 1 outcomes by area

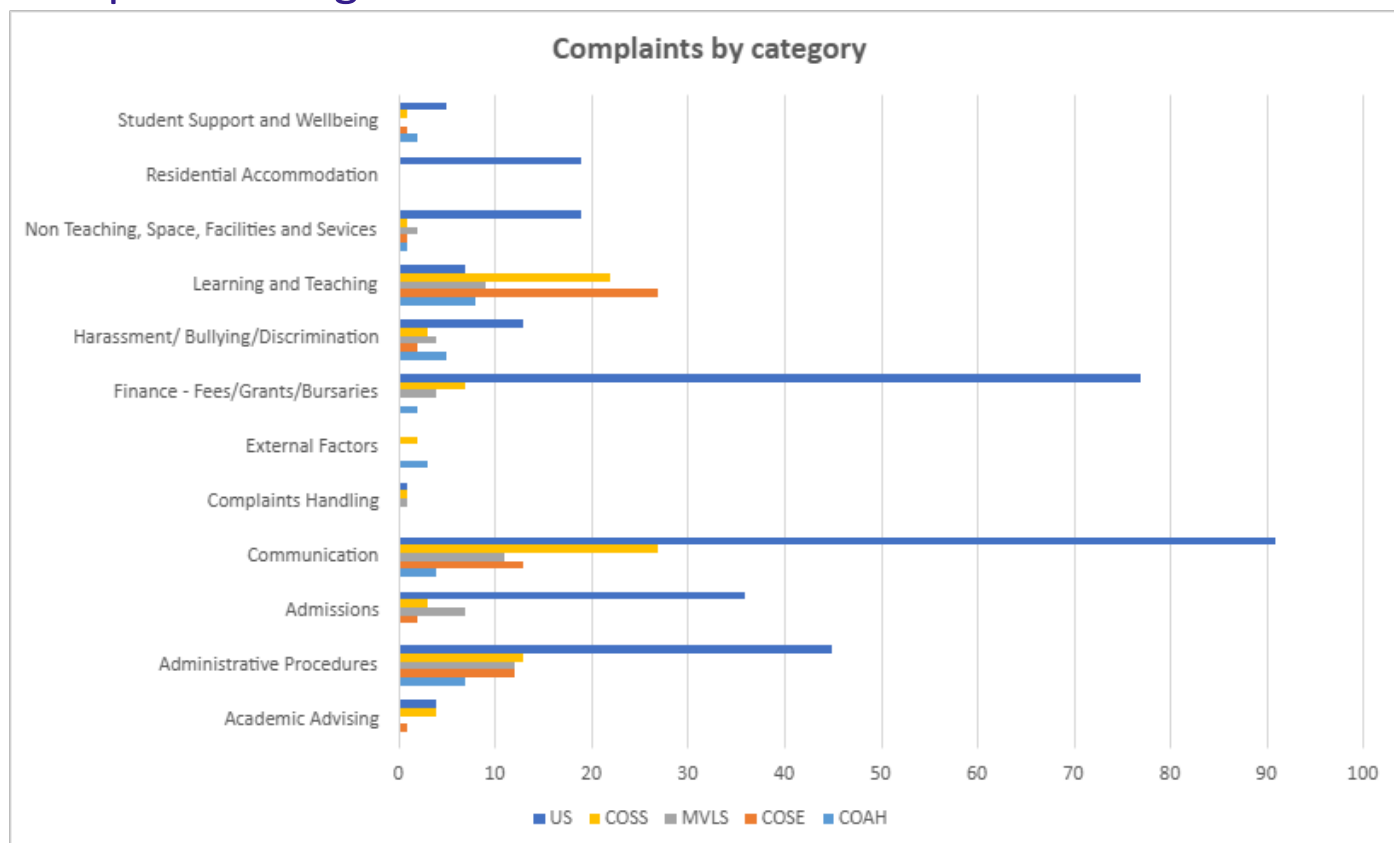


Stage 2 outcome by area



³ Some complaints are about issues that span more than one area. Those cases are included in the area where greatest responsibility lies for the purposes of this report

Complaint categories and themes



Key Themes

Registration and enrolment

Course enrolment processes are an area of concern for complainants. Issues raised include lack of clarity on the processes, delayed responses to requests for essential information required to confirm course choices, inability to enrol on mandatory courses and delays in receiving resit grades which are required to meet course pre-requisites. These issues are exacerbated by the fact that the course enrolment window is limited, and certain courses are in high demand.

Fee and funding related issues

There is a trend of uncertainty surrounding fee and funding related issues. Complainants have raised concerns about information not being shared with relevant funding bodies, student withdrawal processes not being completed and a lack of clarity on who to contact with queries about fee amounts and support available in cases of financial difficulty. Complainants have indicated that these issues have been a source of stress and have had a negative impact on their ability to continue their studies or study at different institutions.

Student record issues

A number of inaccuracies with Students' records have been reported. These include updated personal data not being retained in MyGlasgow, name changes not being reflected across university systems, grades not entered on the system, incorrect mode of study or student status being recorded and financial information not being updated. These issues have created challenges for students, for example inaccuracies in parchments, inability to graduate and difficulty in applying for funding not related to the university.

Support for students

As in previous years, and reflective of the fact that students face many challenges during their studies, including disability, health related concerns and other pressures, implementation of reasonable adjustments and additional support for wellbeing needs not being met continues to be a cause for concern.

PGR Studies

A number of PGR students have reported concerns about supervision. These complaints have included concerns about bullying or inappropriate behaviour, lack of awareness or lack of support for disabilities and failure to appropriately raise progress concerns.

Learning from Complaints

This year complaint outcomes have identified improvements to policies, procedures, methods of communication, assessment, staff training and improvements to support made available because of complaints submitted to us. These have included:

Theme	Learning or Recommendation
Academic Advising	Ensure that Advisors of Studies are aware of the responsibilities under the Student Maternity, Maternity Support and Adoption Policy.
Academic Advising/ Communications	Improve responsiveness to communications from advisors
Finance	Improvements to processes for updating students' records regularly to ensure information is accurate and up to date.
Finance	The majority of finance related complaints centre around timeliness of refunds. The following improvements have been identified: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A new process via the payments partner to reduce the refund processing time.• The guidance on payment methods has been updated on the UoG webpages to steer students to the correct routes.• The team previously communicated with the student each time a milestone was received but realised that most of our complaints are around lack of communication, as such the team have started to communicate more regularly with updates even if the case has not yet moved to the next stage.• Currently working on developing standard SLAs in respect of refunds so that these can be communicated to the student and other departments in order to manage expectations better.
Finance	Ongoing review to ensure our communications are polite, accurate and informative
Administrative Procedures	Reminder of guidance for managing incidents to prevent disruption and escalation during exams
Administrative Procedures	Improvements to Code of Student Conduct. Additional training for Committee members
Administrative Procedures	Ensure greater alignment with University processes to ensure clarity and avoid confusion
Administrative Procedures	Review of procedures and inductions to ensure student awareness of University wide policies, procedures and contract/regulations
Administrative Procedures	Improve clarity of information available, regarding refund policy for bench fees
Administrative Procedures	Clarify timelines with relevant partners and emphasise eligibility for funding to avoid confusion and disappointment
Administrative Procedures	Explore implementation of additional communications to ensure applicants are kept informed of progress of application
Administrative Procedures	Improvement to current processes to enhance clarity for students, including consideration of elements for automation.
Admissions /Complaints Handling	Admissions and Enquiry Service identified that having a dedicated point of contact for complaints would be beneficial
Communication	Ensure staff are aware of key contact for enrolment queries within the School to ensure that students are signposted to relevant support
Communication	Review of notifications to make improvements to clarity and timeliness of communications and signposting.
Communication	Refresher training provided to improve communication with students
Complaints Handling	Improvements to engagement with the complaints handling procedure

Course Guidance and Information/Learning and Teaching	Ensure that students have clear information about projects so that they understand their own responsibilities and know who to contact for support and guidance.
Learning and Teaching	Concerns raised about quality of course to be taken into consideration when considering course improvements
Learning and Teaching /Communication	Follow up to ensure consideration has been given to prevent lack of communication from dissertation supervisor and clarity of information for students about who to contact if they experience issues.
Student Support	Ensure students receive appropriate support during enrolment period.
Student Support	Information about alternative support channels should be more easily accessible/more clearly signposted to students
Student Support	Improvements to ensure reasonable adjustments are implemented and support is appropriate.
Student Support	Improvements to accessibility of reading lists to identify core/essential material
Student Support	Review of processes to ensure that PGR students' disability information is being shared as appropriate
Non-teaching space, facilities and Services	Implementation of additional safety measures

Response times

SPSO KPI 3: The number of complaints closed in full at stage 1, stage 2 and after escalation within MCHP timescales as a proportion of all stage 1, stage 2 and escalated complaints.

Stage 1 complaints

In line with the procedure, the aim is to respond to complaints quickly at Stage 1. This could mean an on-the-spot apology and explanation if something has clearly gone wrong, or immediate action to resolve the problem. A decision at stage 1 should be communicated in five working days or less, and ten in exceptional circumstances.

	Total %	No. by area	CoAH	CoSE	CoSS	MVLS	US	Total
Within 5 days	43%	Within 5 days	3	19	12	3	73	110
6-10 days	22%	6-10 days	2	8	8	5	32	55
Longer than 11 days	35%	Longer than 11 days	2	6	17	10	54	89

Stage 2 Complaints

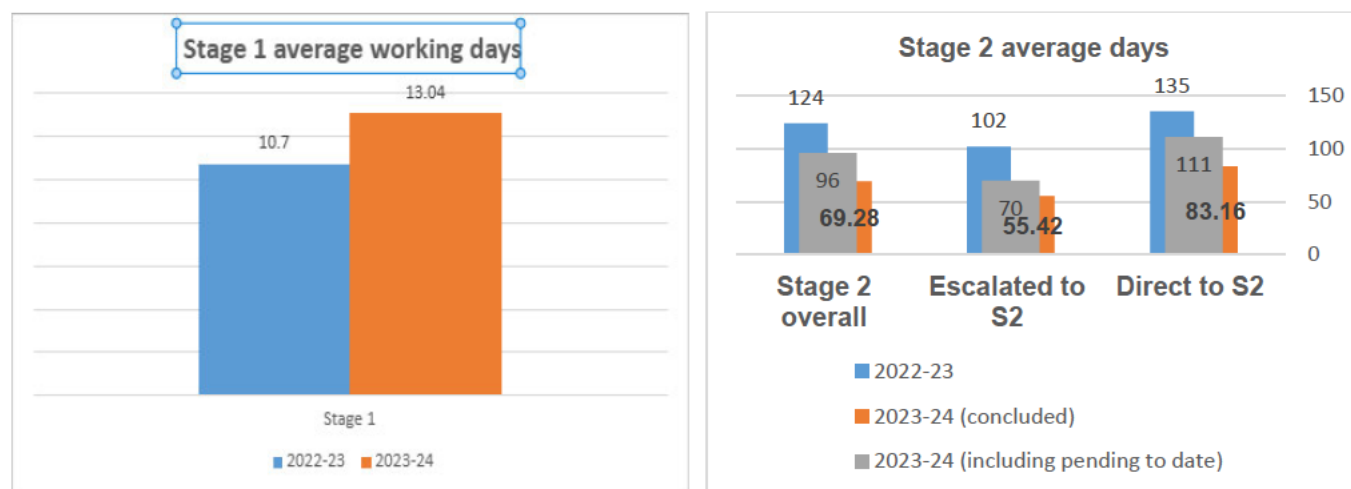
In line with the procedure, we will try to resolve complaints. We aim where possible to provide a final response as within 20 working days. There are occasions where this is not achievable. If our investigation will take longer than 20 working days, we will tell the complainant of our revised time limits and keep them updated on progress.

Stage 2 timescales		Stage 2 direct	Stage 2 escalated
1 -20 days	10.0%	5.3%	18.2%
21 – 60 days	20.0%	13.2%	31.8%
>60 days ⁴	70.0%	81.6%	50.0%

⁴ Includes pending cases not yet concluded.

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

SPSO KPI4: The data shows the average (mean) time in working days to respond at stage 1, stage 2 and after escalation.



The complexity of cases has continued to increase, and delays have also been contributed to in some cases by availability of relevant colleagues required to input to the complaint remedy or response, difficulty contacting the complainant, or the complainant taking longer to respond.

Some Stage 2 cases are pending, the chart illustrates both average days of concluded cases and the average days including the pending cases (to date), compared with last year. Average days will be recalculated once these are complete.

CRO process developments

- Review and improvements: All aspects of the processes related to Complaints Handling have been mapped and reviewed.
- The procedure and processes for managing complaint handling at Stage 1 of the procedure, has been undertaken with the emphasis on resolution.
- Improved triage: Better, more considered, and more consistent identification of concerns that should rightfully be: a) addressed as requests for service or information (pre-CHP) rather than as complaints, b) referred to another more appropriate procedure, c) are matters that cannot be considered under the CHP (as defined by the SPSOs Model Complaints Handling Procedure).

Ongoing:

- Improved partnership working: Working with colleagues across the University to develop shared approaches to addressing and responding student concerns, to respond more effectively at Stage 1 (quick resolution) of the procedure, the CRO team has increased the amount of support and guidance provides to colleagues in responding, thereby ensuring that responses adequately address concerns and hopefully reducing the likelihood of complaints being escalated to Stage 2.
- Data: Review and development of the process and procedures for capturing and recording complaint data. This has led to increased accuracy and consistency and production of summary data to meet the statutory reporting requirements against KPIs.
- The improved data capture feeds directly into enhancements to reporting, including KPIs which cover, complaint numbers, response times, escalation, and outcomes, and greater learning from complaints.
- Producing data for schools, colleges and services, and to feed into monitoring and enhancement processes, i.e. PSR, Student Services Review etc.
- Review processes for managing complaint handling at Stage 2 of the procedure is underway.

Additional data

Comparison of complaint volumes year on year⁵

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Total incidents	-	-	-	607	644	721
Request for service and/or information	-	-	-	93	189	309
Referred to another procedure	-	-	-	64	53	65
Complaints which cannot be concluded through the CHP	-	-	-	4	3	33
Stage 1	119	133	172	364	338	254
Stage 2 (overall)	47	58	72	84	61	60

SPSO

	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Cases referred to SPSO by complainant	19	14	21	10	9
SPSO Response					
<i>Not taken forward</i>	18	14	20	9	8
▪ Premature (internal procedures not completed)					
▪ Out of jurisdiction	1	2	2	1	1
▪ Out of time	1	1	1	2	
▪ University response reasonable/ Further investigation unlikely to achieve more	13	7	15	6	6
▪ Other	3	4	2		1
<i>Decision following Full Assessment:</i>					
▪ Complaint upheld			1		
▪ Some elements of complaint upheld	1				
▪ Complaint not upheld					
▪ Pending				1	1

⁵ Since the introduction of Ivanti to record cases in 2021-22, all incidents received have been logged.