



University
of Glasgow



Complaints Handling Procedure Annual Report 2024 - 2025

Complaints Resolution Office

Introduction and overview

The University is committed to delivering an excellent educational experience for our students, as well as high-quality services for all other users of University provision. Our Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP), based on the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman’s Model Complaints Handling Procedure for Higher Education, enables us to use complaints constructively to review and strengthen our services. A complaint is defined by the SPSO as any expression of dissatisfaction about our action, inaction, or the standard of service provided.

The CHP consists of two internal stages:

- **Stage 1 (Frontline)** – to be handled within five working days (exceptionally ten).
- **Stage 2 (Investigation)** – to be handled within twenty working days.

Complainants who remain dissatisfied after Stage 2 may refer their case 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 report summarises key performance indicators for complaints considered through the CHP between **1 August 2024 and 31 July 2025**, highlighting trends in complaint themes, outcomes, and response times, as well as improvements made as a result of learning from complaints.

Total number of complaints received

This section outlines 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. It also shows the number of incidents received that were not responded to via the CHP.

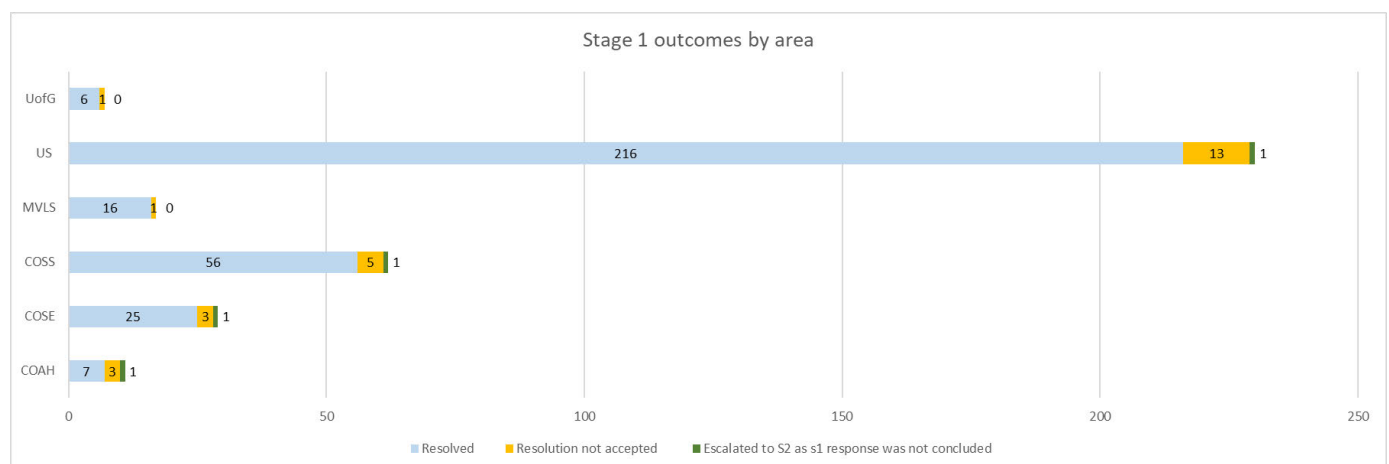
Total number of incidents received	720						
Request for service and/or information	235						
Referred to another procedure	22						
		Stage 1		Not taken forward	Stage 2 Overall	Escalated to Stage 2	Direct to Stage 2
Cases	463	380		38	45	25	20
Withdrawn by complainant before conclusion		24			8	3	5

The outcome of complaints at each stage

SPSO KPI2: An overview of the outcome of complaints, by percentage¹

Outcome	Stage 1 (%)	Stage 2 overall (%)	Escalated to S2 (%)	Direct to S2 (%)
		Including NTF ²	Of stage 2 concluded	
Not taken forward	0.00%	45.78%		
Withdrawn	6.32%	9.64%	15.00%	20.00%
Resolution /Remedy	85.79%	7.23%	10.00%	16.00%
Resolution not accepted	6.84%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Not upheld	0.00%	10.84%	25.00%	16.00%
Upheld in part	0.00%	12.05%	20.00%	24.00%
Upheld	0.00%	4.82%	15.00%	4.00%
Pending	0.00%	9.64%	15.00%	20.00%
Refer to another procedure	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
S1 escalated as response was not concluded	1.05%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%

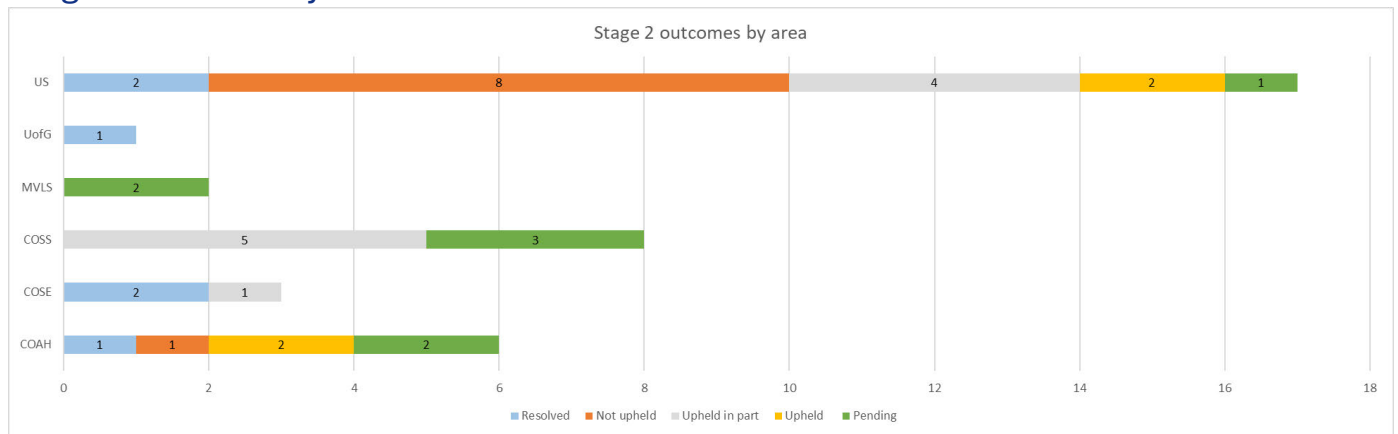
Stage 1 outcomes by area



¹ 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

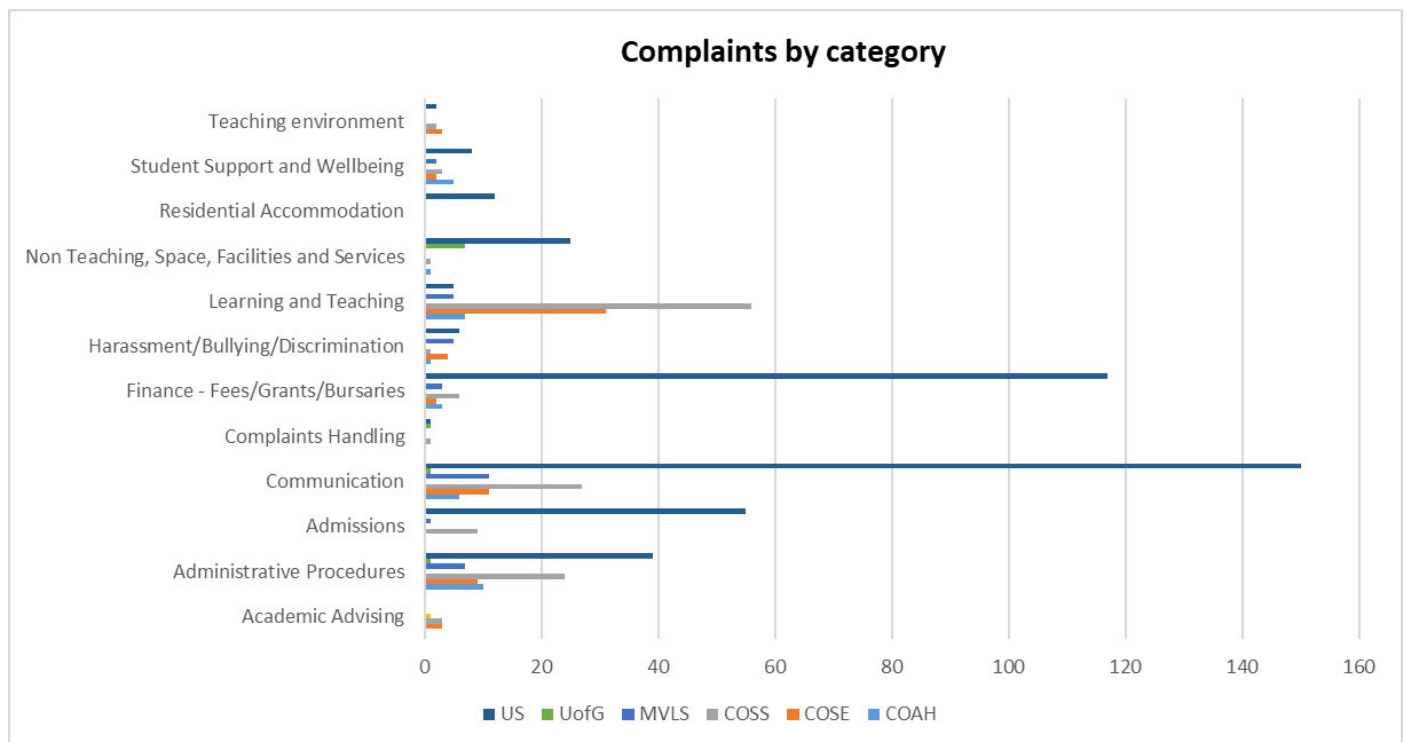
² Cases where the Stage 1 response was adequate, the complaint was out of time, or the CHP was not an appropriate route.

Stage 2 outcome by area



Complaint categories and themes

Key Themes



The issues most frequently raised through the CHP have been related to communication, finance, enrolment, processes and procedures, admissions, and learning, teaching and supervision.

Communication

Communication continued to feature prominently across a wide range of complaints. Students reported unclear or inconsistent information, delays in receiving responses or updates, difficulty accessing appropriate points of contact, and instances where the consequences of decisions or actions were not clearly explained.

Assessment and feedback

Assessment and feedback concerns included administrative errors, unclear information about exam duration or format, and issues with ensuring reasonable adjustments were in place.

Finance & funding processes

Finance issues commonly centred on delays in communication, inaccurate or outdated financial records, problems arising when students returned from interruption of study, and lack of clarity on who to contact with funding or fee related queries.

Registration and enrolment

Registration and enrolment issues included inconsistent processes across Schools and Colleges, delays in confirming required information, challenges enrolling on mandatory courses, delays in receiving resit results that impacted pre-requisite courses, and lack of signposting to support and guidance.

Students also reported conflicting information about visas, including uncertainty around what documentation was required at Visa Registration and confusion arising from inconsistent advice.

Students returning after a period of absence

Students returning after an approved period of absence reported several difficulties. These included challenges accessing timely and accurate information about how and when to resume studies, which in some cases led to delays in their return. Students also experienced inconsistent or unclear communication from Colleges regarding resumption requirements, leading to misunderstandings about the implications for their study duration or completion timelines. In addition, some students encountered errors or delays in the clarity of their financial records on return.

Admissions

Elements of the application processes are causing incorrect and inconsistent information to be conveyed to applicants and new students particularly where information is being provided by the admissions team and the School or College. This includes information about interviews and eligibility. Lack of communication and updates on application status have led to delays in updates and confirmation of offer status.

Learning from Complaints

Learning from complaint outcomes has led to a range of improvements across policies, processes, staff training and communication practices. These include enhancements to administrative procedures, clearer student facing information, improvements in assessment and feedback processes, and strengthened support for students at key transition points. Additional improvements have focused on making sources of advice more visible, streamlining communication between Schools and central services, and ensuring that staff are better supported in handling concerns effectively. Together, these developments support a more consistent and transparent experience for students.

Administrative Procedures	Admissions	Additional training has been given on the correct procedure for checking applications, the importance of ensuring disability registrations and provisions have been taken into consideration and using University-supported equipment to avoid technical issues.
Administrative Procedures	Communication	Acknowledgement of miscommunications between Admissions and School - learning has already taken place via the UKVI audit and all students Erasmus Mundus student will only be given the option of a visitor visa
Administrative Procedures	Communication	Better/more timely communication required between School and College to avoid appeal delays.
Administrative Procedures	Communication	School staff will ensure they have an out of office on during periods of high workload to better manage expectations on response times. Information about programmes cancellations will be communicated better with students in the future.
Administrative Procedures	Communication	Webpages to be reviewed so that grants/scholarship information is clear to students.
Administrative Procedures	Communication	Review of Scholarship procedures to minimise failings in stipend payments, improve timing and automation of communication and ensure applicants are aware of new scholarship opportunities.
Administrative Procedures	Communication	Greater clarity in information about scholarship, and eligibility requirements
Administrative Procedures	Communication	UoG Sport will amend the membership agreement to reference the right to carry out membership checks on a periodic basis, so this is clearer to all members moving forward.

Administrative Procedures	Communication	Communication from college to students regarding resumption of studies needs to be accurate and timely, to avoid misunderstandings and errors with students' planning.
Administrative Procedures	Communication	Review of administrative and communications processes and procedures, to ensure greater clarity for students to avoid misunderstandings.
Administrative Procedures	Communication	School will publish an accessible phone number so that enquirers are able to reach a member of staff for advice and guidance
Administrative Procedures	Communication	Ensure that students arriving after course start date are made aware of impact this will have on course completion dates and any associated admin procedures
Administrative Procedures	Communication	Ensure that accurate and appropriately detailed information is conveyed to UofG students applying to the Exchange & Study Abroad programme
Administrative Procedures	Communication	Identified that communication between Schools and central services regarding visiting students' needs to be streamlined, and feedback taken onboard to improve service delivery.
Administrative Procedures	Communication	Review the support and guidance provided to international students and ensure greater clarity in communications.
Administrative Procedures	Communication	Improve experience for returning students through the ongoing development of the new Student Wellbeing policies and administrative processes
Administrative Procedures	Complaints Handling	Complaints procedure for GUSA clubs to be reviewed and more training provided to ensure implemented appropriately.
Administrative Procedures	Complaints Handling	CRO to ensure updated processes for recording cases escalated to Stage 2 are followed correctly.
Administrative Procedures	Enrolment	Improved collaboration between central services and Schools with a view to improving awareness of appointment and drop-in sessions, academic feedback timeframes and course enrolment processes for incoming exchange students.
Administrative Procedures	Enrolment	Ensure staff are aware of course enrolment processes, including adding and dropping courses, and that students are signposted to relevant support
Administrative Procedures	Enrolment	Registry to ensure student records are promptly activated once created.
Administrative Procedures	Enrolment	Improve communication, systems, and guidance allowing students to access relevant support for enrolment easily. The Disability Service to ensure that disabled students' experiences of enrolment are in scope of the Routes to Enrolment Programme
Administrative Procedures	Finance	Student Finance to review its processes for managing financial records of students returning after a break from study.
Administrative Procedures	Finance	Checks have been added to the student withdrawal process to ensure bursary payments are not paid to withdrawn students in error.
Administrative Procedures	Finance	School/College to have a better understanding of roles and responsibilities when amending students' financial records.
Administrative Procedures	Finance	Review of customer service levels and ensure all of an individuals' concerns are investigated before closing a ticket and that enquiries are responded to in a timely manner. Additional learning, to review SAAS funding allocations in a timely manner.
Administrative Procedures	Finance	Finance to work on a wide system review to enhance and improve the accuracy automated fee letters issued to part-time students.
Administrative Procedures	Finance	Finance team to make sure non-attendance is reported timely to SAAS and records are kept up-to-date.
Administrative Procedures	Finance	Finance Office to update student records promptly and contact students regarding outstanding balances
Administrative Procedures	Finance	Financial Aid to report resumptions to SFE in a timely manner
Administrative Procedures	Policies and procedures	Continue to review policies in line with Ross Report recommendations to ensure appropriate clarity and harmonisation of procedures.
Administrative Procedures	Student Records	Ensure information held in systems is accurate to ensure that information in student records and associated documentation populates correctly
Administrative Procedures	Communication	Improve monitoring of shared inboxes to ensure emails are responded to promptly and appropriately, and to ensure prioritisation/ escalation where appropriate.
Administrative Procedures	Training	Refresher training session for staff on Student Conduct policy and procedures.
Administrative Procedures	Training	Security team to work with building staff to clarify processes around access permissions.
Admissions	Enrolment	Admissions to work with IT team to identify technical issues including incorrect time stamps on new applications, applicant records not moving to the registration side of MyCampus as expected and issues with the online application system.
Admissions	Training	Admissions Team to undertake further training in relaying accurate information on entry requirements, tuition fees and changes to course information to the applicants. Admissions to try and make link to the admissions guidance on every Undergraduate programme page more visible.

Assessment and Exams	Policies and procedures	Course convenor to be reminded on exam duration policy and to consider the number of questions being asked when designing assessments
Assessment and Exams	Administrative issues	Schools have been made aware of administrative issues which arose during a degree exam and have been fully reviewing all mitigating options to ensure no students will be penalised as a result. Full review of incident will be conducted to ensure that these issues will not arise again in the future
Assessment and Exams	Learning and Teaching	Incorporate feedback from complaints about group work marking scheme on board through the Learning and Teaching Committee.
Assessment and Exams		The weighting of coursework/ final exams will be reviewed in future delivery of courses.
Communication	Admissions	Admissions Team to work with the Erasmus Mundus consortium, identify errors in information on website and decision letters sent out.
Communication	Admissions	Improve communications with offer holders to emphasise the importance of not travelling without a visa
Communication	Attendance monitoring	It is recommended that Schools reflect on the importance of communicating sensitively with students on matters of attendance and engagement.
Communication	Complaints Handling	Schools have worked with the CRO to improve local complaint handling process and provide updates on the status of a complaint.
Communication	Disability support/ Admissions	It is recommended that guidance on interview arrangements, including requests for reasonable adjustments is included in interview invitation letters
Communication	Graduation	Improve clarity and accuracy of information for students on webpages and provided by staff in respect of arrangements for graduation ceremonies
Communication	Learning and Teaching	Improve communication and available information to ensure that students are clear of their own responsibilities and to manage expectations regarding the summer vacation project. Ensure that summer vacation students are aware of who to contact should they encounter any problems during their project.
Communication	Policies and procedures	It is recommended that the School ensure that students and staff are aware of the correct process for raising data protection and confidentiality concerns.
Communication	Student Accommodation	Ensure robust procedure is in place to ensure communication about visits from contractors to student residences is prompt and clear.
Communication	Supervision	It is recommended that the Graduate School ensure that students are advised of their primary and secondary supervisors' respective roles and responsibilities and the accompanying expectations regarding the allocation of supervision contact time at an early stage in their studies.
Communication	Supervision	It is recommended that supervisors reflect on their communication with students to consider whether any concerns could be explored more sensitively.
Communication	Supervision	Ensure information about escalation of concerns in relation to dissertation supervision is clear to staff and students
Communication	Training	Staff should be given refresher training on relevant policies regarding the use of inclusive language
Communication	Training	Additional training to be offered to highlight the standard of service expected to be provided
Disability Support	Assessment and Exams	Ensure reasonable adjustment are in place for students during exam time
Enrolment	Finance	School working to fix enrolment issues for CPD courses. School adapting current processes with Finance to double check erroneous fee overdue notices
Learning and Teaching	Assessment and Exams	Explore whether amendments to assessment calendar could meaningfully reduce delays in marking/releasing of grades
Learning and Teaching	Assessment and Exams	Invigilators on duty during exams reminded to be cognizant of sound levels to mitigate any disruptions.
Learning and Teaching	Communication	Improved signposting to students of avenues for providing feedback on courses, tutorial groups and overall student experience.
Learning and Teaching	Communication	School to review teaching materials, quality of the teaching delivery and general communication.
Learning and Teaching	Disability support	Academic staff reminded to adhere to AILP and make sure tutorial materials are available to students in a variety of forms.
Learning and Teaching	Information and guidance	Information relating to programme funding should be made explicitly clear.
Learning and teaching	Supervision	Improvements to communications and establishing expectations within project teams. Development sessions for Principal Investigators and their project teams introduced with the aim of establishing expectations around roles, responsibilities, and communication. • The appointment of, and support for, PhD supervisors is currently under review at School and College level. Opportunities for PhD students to convey concerns to School management are also subject to further ongoing development, as part of an overhaul of staff-student liaison generally. Together these actions are

		designed to ensure that PhD students are well-supported to pursue their research.
Non Teaching, Space, Facilities and Services	Assessment and Exams	Estates and Facilities and Undergraduate Medical School to monitor room temperature and make sure conditions for exam taking are appropriate.
Non Teaching, Space, Facilities and Services	Health and Safety	The Facilities teams will review what further actions could be taken to improve safety
Non Teaching, Space, Facilities and Services	Training	Refresher training may be of use to exam invigilators; in particular, training on how to handle specific scenarios that might arise during the course of an examination.
Non Teaching, Space, Facilities and Services	Training	Refresher training for staff to improve customer service levels in food and beverage outlets.
Non Teaching, Space, Facilities and Services	Training	Staff members reminded of professional code of conduct and to be more mindful of their actions may affect others
Non Teaching, Space, Facilities and Services	Training	Staff members to be made aware of the expected behaviours and the standard of service to be delivered.
Student Support and Wellbeing	Communication	Review practices to ensure appropriate information about disability related needs adjustments are shared with relevant teams when student circumstances are being considered the University procedures or processes, for example, Student Conduct.
Student Support and Wellbeing	Communication	Information about alternative support channels should be more easily accessible to students
Student Support and Wellbeing	Communication	Ensure students' Disability Record provides clear and unambiguous information to staff regarding a students needs and required adjustments
Student Wellbeing and Inclusion	Sport	Implement measures to protect the integrity of female-only fitness classes to ensure that religious observances are respected.

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

The CHP aims to resolve Stage 1 complaints quickly, often through on the spot action where appropriate. A Stage 1 response should normally be provided within five working days, or ten in exceptional circumstances. Responses may involve an apology, a clear explanation of what went wrong, or prompt action to resolve the matter. The data shows the distribution of Stage 1 responses across the three timescale categories.

	Total %	No. by area	CoAH	CoSE	CoSS	MVLS	US	UofG	Total
Within 5 days	46.35	Within 5 days	6	16	30	5	108	0	165
6-10 days	28.09	6-10 days	1	5	14	8	66	6	100
Longer than 11 days	25.56	Longer than 11 days	4	8	18	4	56	1	91

Stage 2 Complaints

At Stage 2, the University aims to provide a final response within 20 working days. In cases where this is not achievable, complainants are informed of the revised timescales and kept updated throughout the investigation. The data reflects the proportion of Stage 2 complaints closed within 1–20 days, 21–60 days, and over 60 days (including pending cases not yet concluded). Cases take longer to conclude because the complexity of cases has continued to increase, and due to competing caseloads. 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.

Stage 2 timescales		Stage 2 escalated	Stage 2 direct
1 -20 days	8.11%	12.5%	4.76%
21 – 60 days	27.03%	50.00%	9.52%

>60 days³

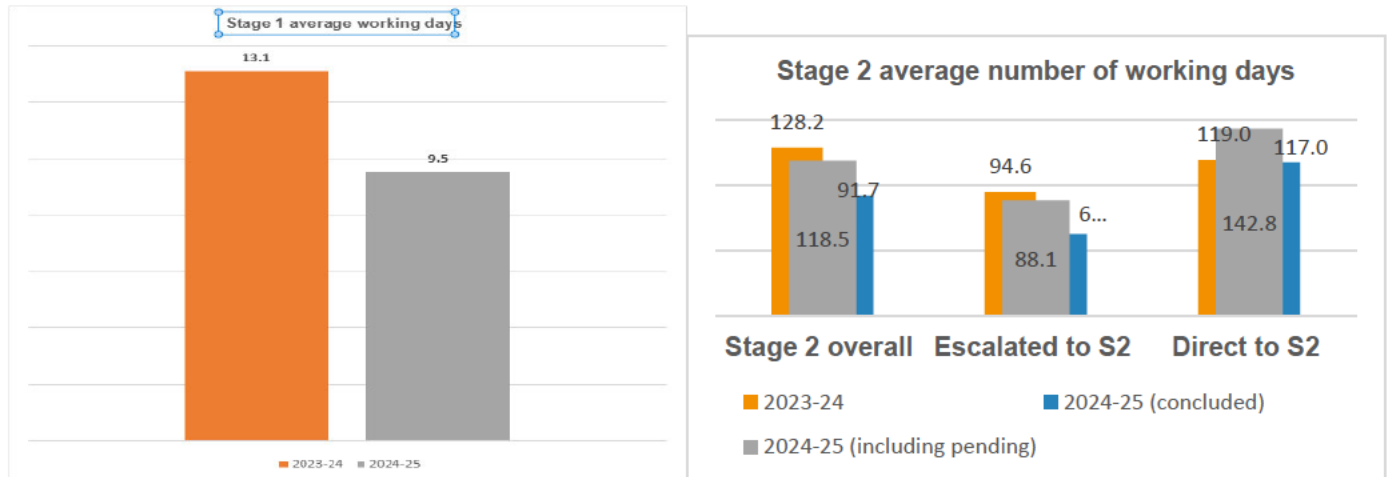
64.86%

37.50%

85.71%

The average time in working days

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



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. As pending cases are concluded, the average working days will be recalculated. Continued refinement of triage processes, targeted staff support, and improvements in communication are expected to further reduce response times over the coming year.

The average response time has reduced from 13.1 working days to 9.5 working days. The reduction in average days demonstrates that recent improvements to triage, improved case handling at Stage 1, including early resolution and improved partnership working. These improvements have been achieved despite a 43% increase in Stage 1 complaint volume.

There has also been an overall improvement in response times for Stage 2 complaints (to date). The percentage of cases concluded in fewer than 60 working days, compared to 2023/24 has increased from 30% to 35%.

Since 2023–24, enhancements to the triage process have allowed clearer distinction between cases requiring further investigation and those where the Stage 1 response has already fully addressed the concerns raised. Where the Stage 1 response appropriately resolves all issues and offers a meaningful remedy, these cases are now concluded as not taken forward (rather than not upheld at Stage 2). This ensures complainants receive timely closure and supports more realistic expectation-setting.

The average time taken to conclude these not taken forward cases is 52.6 working days, reflecting the challenges of managing a competing caseload alongside complex investigations. This category also includes complaints submitted out of time and those raising issues not covered by the Complaints Handling Procedure.

Complaints have continued to increase in complexity, notably there has been an increase in the use of AI to generate complaints and communication. There has also been an increase in individuals submitting multiple complaints.

³ Includes pending cases not yet concluded.

CRO process developments

Resolution is at the heart of the CHP we have recently undertaken a review of the procedure for managing complaint handling has been undertaken with the emphasis on resolution. An improved triage process has ensured that complaints are handled appropriately. This has reduced premature escalation and improved early identification of concerns that should rightfully be addressed via alternative routes.

We also continue to improve partnership working with colleagues across the University to develop shared approaches to addressing and responding student concerns, the CRO team has increased the 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.

Additional data

Comparison of complaint volumes year on year⁴

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Total incidents	-	-	-	607	644	719	720
Request for service and/or information	-	-	-	93	189	309	235
Referred to another procedure	-	-	-	64	53	65	22
Not taken forward	-	-	-	4	3	33	70
Stage 1	119	133	172	364	338	265	380
Stage 2 (overall)	47	58	72	84	61	60	37
Complaints withdrawn	3	1	2	40	19	14	32

SPSO

Table 6: Referrals to Scottish Public Service Ombudsman

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Cases referred to SPSO by complainant	6	7	6	7	14	14	19	14	21	11	14	2
SPSO Response												
<i>Not taken forward</i>												
▪ Premature (internal procedures not completed)						1						
▪ Out of jurisdiction	2	1	1	1		4	1	2	2	1	1	
▪ Out of time					2	2	1	1	1	2	1	
▪ University response reasonable/		5	2	3	4	3	13	7	14	7	10	2

⁴ Since 2021-22, all incidents received have been logged.

Further investigation unlikely to achieve more													
▪ Other				1	1		3	4	2			1	
<i>Decision Letter following Full Assessment:</i>													
▪ All elements of complaint upheld	1				6	3			1				
▪ Some elements of complaint upheld	1		2		1	1	1						
▪ Complaint not upheld	2	1	1	2									
▪ Pending									1	1	1		