

A photograph of two women sitting in an office. The woman on the left has curly hair, is wearing a light pink jacket and a blue lanyard, and is smiling while talking to the woman on the right. The woman on the right has straight hair, is wearing a dark green sweater, and is listening. They are in a modern office with a desk, a computer monitor, and a window with blinds in the background.

Annual Complaints Handling Report

(August 2023-July 2024)

Report Publication Date:
Autumn 2024

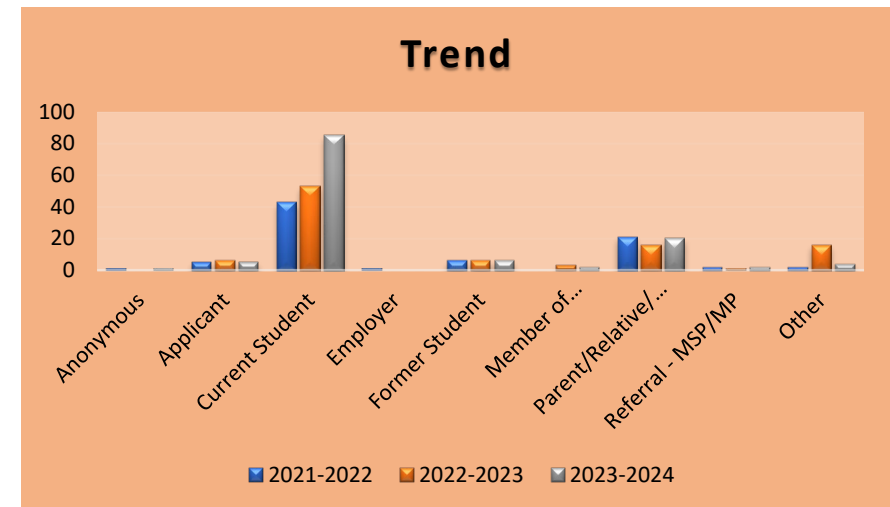
WEST COLLEGE
SCOTLAND 

Context

The College operates its complaints handling procedures in accordance with the procedure for public bodies administered by the [Scottish Public Sector Ombudsman](#) (SPSO). The college regards “expressions of dissatisfaction” as opportunities to review and amend our practices and recognise complaints as key elements of learner, and other stakeholder, feedback. This report is a summary of the complaints received and actions taken for the academic session 2023-2024. Stage 1 refers to routine complaints usually dealt with and resolved within 5 working days. Stage 2 complaints are more complex and often require a degree of investigation to reach a resolution, with a target maximum closure date of 20 working days.

Performance Indicator 1: Total Number of Complaints received at Stages 1 & 2

| Complainants | 2021-2022 | 2022-23 | 2023-2024 |
|--------------|-----------|------------|------------|
| Stage 1 | 34 | 24 | 39 |
| Stage 2 | 47 | 77 | 90 |
| Total | 81 | 101 | 129 |

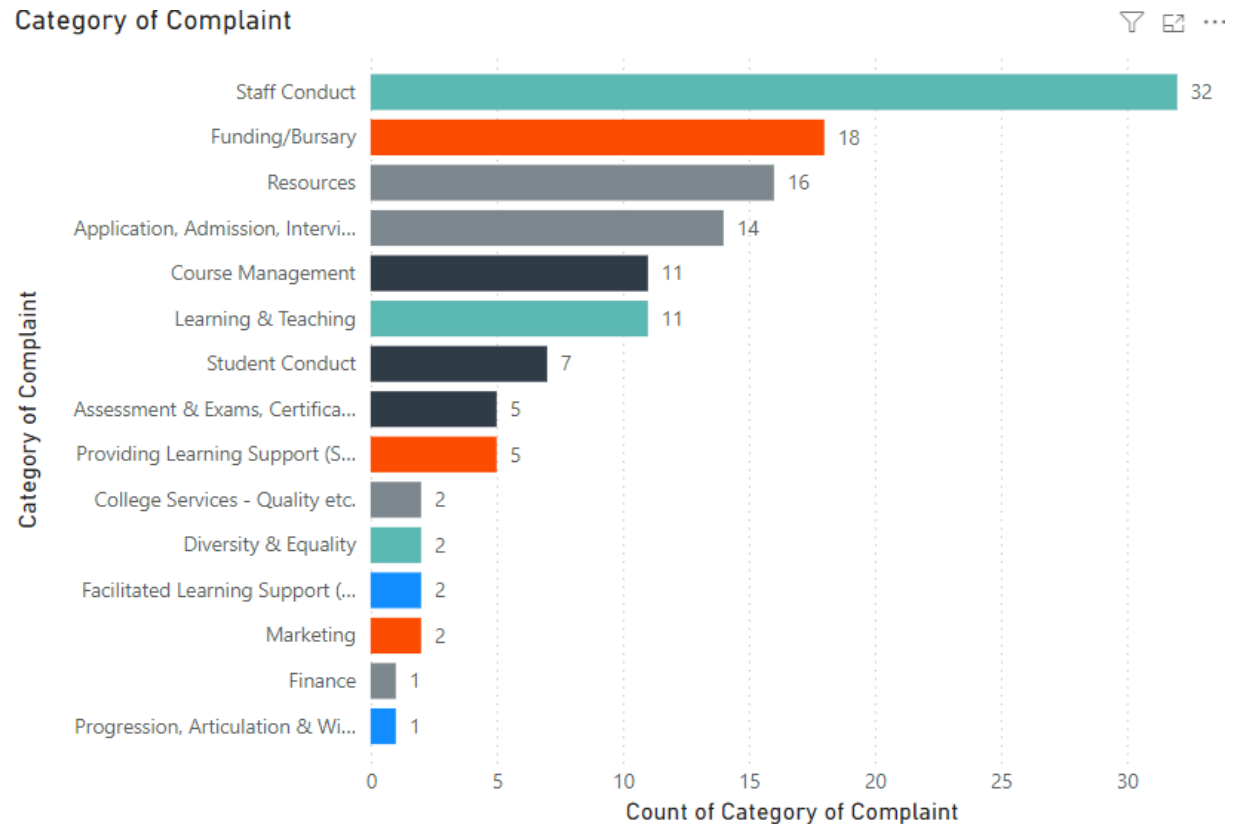


What do our stakeholders complain about?

Complaints are categorised in line with a national college sector agreement with the College Complaints Handling Advisory Group (CHAG) and the SPSO.

Our data highlights that most complaints received in 2023-24 were allocated under Staff Conduct. (Session 22-23 = 24, session 21-22 = 30). Complaints in this category have been showing the highest trend increase over the last three consecutive sessions.

Complaints about Staff Conduct varied in their context, but overall were around how our stakeholders have been perceived to have been treated by staff. Any staff member mentioned in a complaint is notified and offered support.



Performance Indicator 2: The number and percentage of complaints at each stage that were closed in full within the set timescales of five and 20 working days

| | | |
|---------------------------------------|----|-----|
| Stage 1 closed within 5 working days | 31 | 24% |
| Stage 2 closed within 20 working days | 59 | 46% |
| Stage 2 closed after 20 working days | 22 | 17% |

Performance Indicator 3: The average time in working days for a full response to complaints at each stage

| | WCS timeline | SPSO timeline |
|---------------------------------|--------------|---------------|
| Stage 1 | 2.5 days | 5 days |
| Stage 2 | 13 days | 20 days |
| Stage 2 (after 20 working days) | 31 days | NA |

Performance Indicator 4: The Outcome of Complaints at each Stage

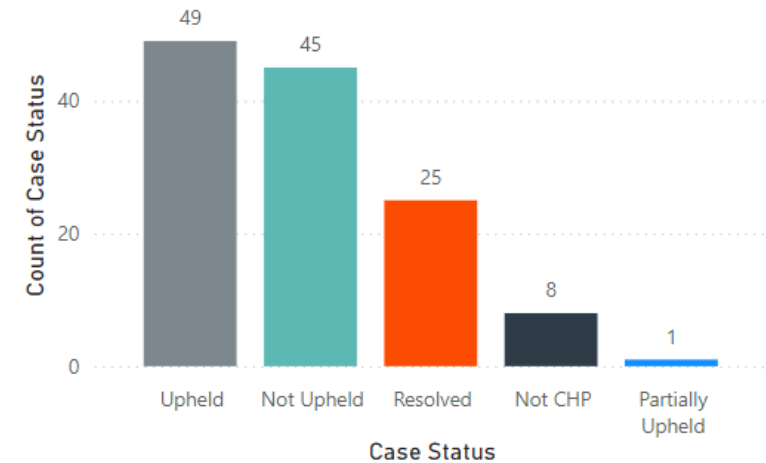
| Complaint Outcome | Number of Stage 1 Complaints | Number of Stage 2 Complaints |
|-------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Upheld | 14 | 35 |
| Partially Upheld | 0 | 1 |
| Not Upheld | 9 | 36 |
| Resolved | 10 | 15 |
| Not CHP | 6 | 2 |

Complaints are determined in one of three categories. They can be **upheld; not upheld or resolved**. The resolved category is used in those situations where that response is considered more appropriate.

Trends - We are making positive progress towards meeting SPSO timelines for closing off Stage 2 complaints mainly due to more efficient practices internally in following up complaints which have escalated to Stage 2.

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Case Status

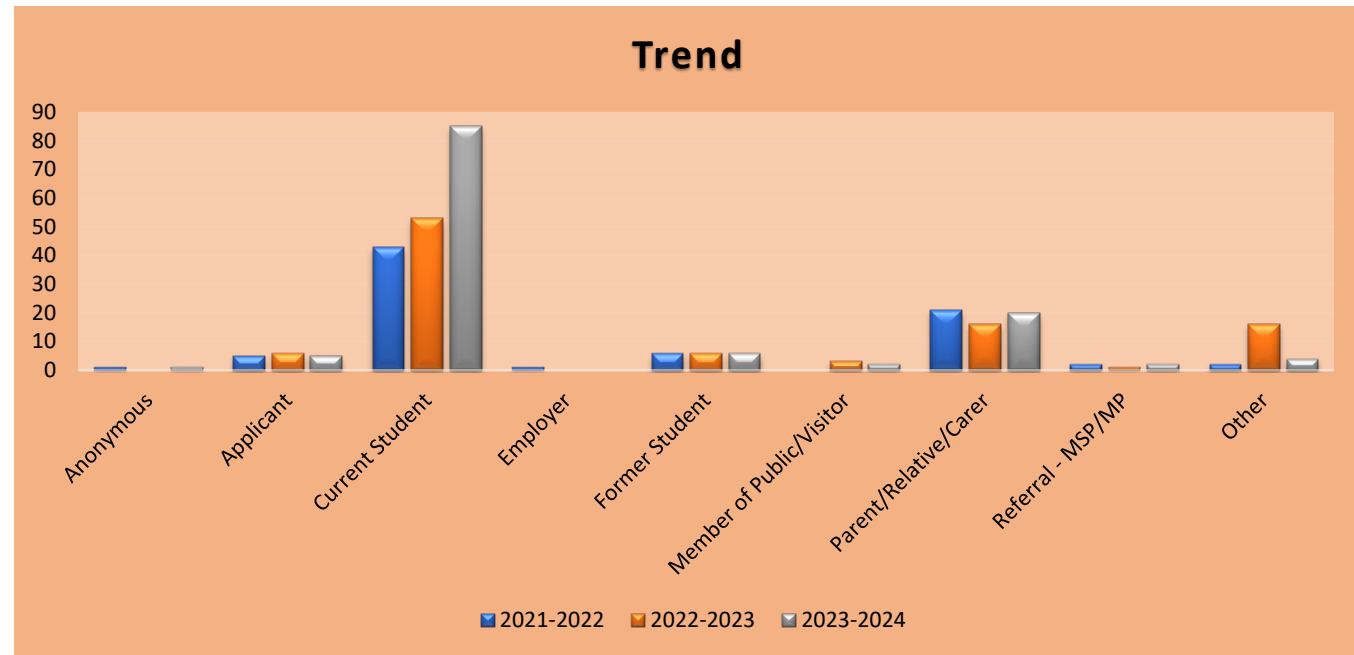


| Complaints By Stage | 2022-23 | 2023-2024 |
|----------------------------|---------|-----------|
| Total received | 101 | 129 |
| Met by Stage 1 (5 days) | 24 | 38 |
| Met by Stage 2 (20 days) | 38 | 68 |
| Outwith SPSO Set Timelines | 39 | 23 |

Who complains?

Similar to previous years, complaints received were overwhelmingly made by current students, with a rise of nearly 50% since session 21/22.

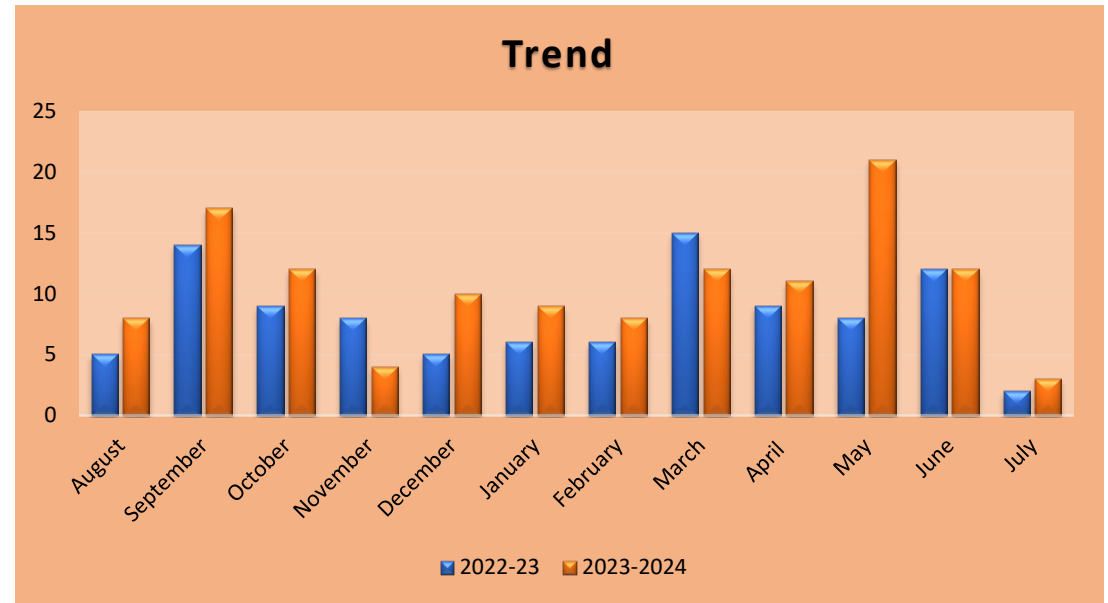
The category of complainant remains consistent with previous years, with perhaps a slight increase in the number of complaints from Parents/Relative/Carer.



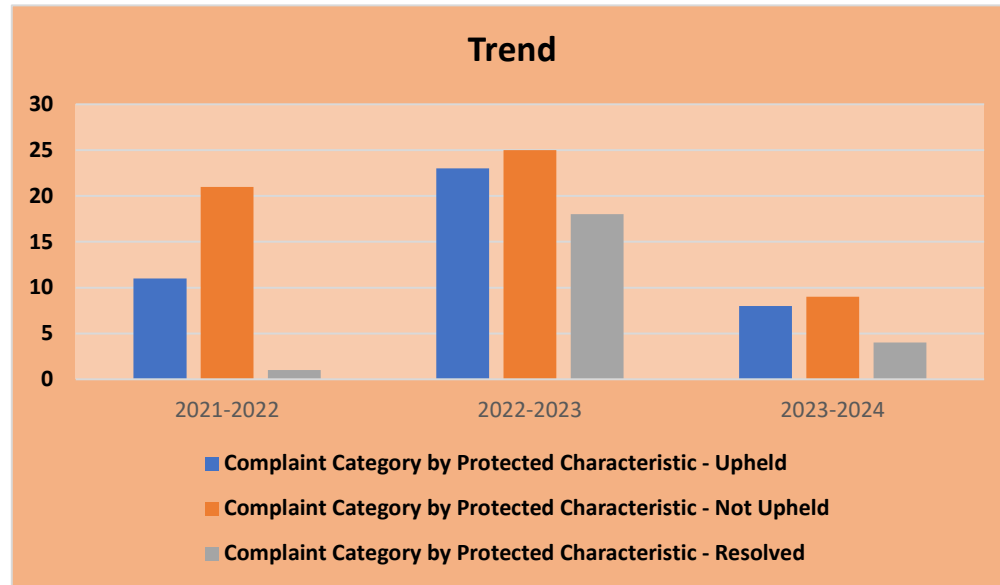
Complaints volume by month

To help us understand and improve our internal efficiency and capacity for allocation to Investigating Managers, we have tracked peak times for receipt of complaints during the last two sessions.

All months apart from November and March have seen an increase in complaint submissions, with peaks at the start and end of each session.



Protected Characteristics



A total of 21 complainants identified a protected characteristic for session 2023-24. Out of the 21 complaints received, 8 were upheld, 9 were not upheld and 4 were resolved.

These figures would suggest that the experience for students with a protected characteristic is better than in the previous session. The college will continue to monitor these statistics year on year.

Complaints handling is supported by an Equality Impact Statement that pro-actively supports a neutral position. We are confident that the implementation of our procedure does not discriminate against, nor benefit, any particular group.

Good Practice

Last session, based on feedback from Investigating Managers (IM), the Quality Department introduced an Investigation Planning Form to support and standardise our process. This has been recognised as good practice by the SPSO and the Complaints Handling Team will continue to support our IMs in using this as a tracking and evidence generating tool.

Areas for continued improvement

- Reminder to all staff that complaints offer an opportunity to improve our services and should be directed through the college complaints handlers
- Improve timelines for resolving complex complaints
- Ensure all investigating managers have undertaken appropriate training for the role

SPSO Referrals

The college had one complaint referred to the SPSO during session 2023-2024. The outcome of this referral was positive with no further action to be taken. SPSO determined that the College's response indicated that the matter had been handled appropriately and had followed our internal procedures.

Lessons Learned from Complaints

The College uses complaints to improve the quality of our service users' experience. Here are some examples of remedial actions taken because a complaint was raised:

| Category of complaint | Main substance of the complaint | Remedial action taken |
|--|--|---|
| Application, Admission, Interview, Enrolment, Induction | The student had applied for access to nursing. Student had a telephone interview but was unsuccessful but was given no reason for the outcome. | Investigating Manager made contact with Operational Manager for Recruitment and Selection, to ensure that updates were made to our system, i.e. reason for non-acceptance on to course. |
| Learning and Teaching | Concerns relating to their classes. | Department to look at the way they split theory and practical work to ensure student engagement. |
| Progression, Articulation & Withdrawal | | No lesson learned identified from complaints received in this category for session 23-24. |
| Staff Conduct | Complaint from former student who feels he was treated unfairly by lecturer due to disabilities. | Handling of sensitive personal information will be conducted on a 1-1 basis with the student going forward. |
| | Student complaint that they had class rules enforced on them in a different manner from classmates. | Ensure that classroom and policies/procedures are enforced consistently across the student body. |