

## **Complaint Handling Procedure Annual Report 2022-23**

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## **Section 1 Introduction and overview**

Whilst Glasgow Clyde College always aims to provide the highest possible quality of service, we recognise that there are times when we do not meet the expectations of our customers. The College welcomes complaints as they can provide information that helps us to learn and improve the way our services are delivered. We regard a complaint as any expression of dissatisfaction, by one or more individuals, about our action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by us, or on our behalf.

We try to resolve complaints to the satisfaction of the customer wherever possible. Where this isn't possible, complainants are provided with a clear response on their complaint. We try to respond as quickly as we can and, on the spot, where possible. Not every complaint is resolved to the satisfaction of the customer, but they are all addressed.

Our complaints process provides two opportunities to resolve (close) complaints internally – Early Resolution and Investigation.

**Early Resolution (Stage 1)** aims to resolve straightforward complaints at the earliest opportunity, as close to the point of service delivery as possible. Any member of staff can deal with complaints at this stage by having a face-to-face discussion with the person or asking an appropriate member of staff to deal directly with the complaint. In either case, the complaint may be settled by providing an on-the-spot apology where appropriate, or explaining why the issue occurred and, where possible, what will be done to stop this happening again. Most complaints received by Glasgow Clyde College are handled at this stage.

Complaints are escalated to **Investigation stage (Stage 2)** when Early Resolution was not possible, and the complainant remained dissatisfied. Complaints are also handled directly at **Stage 2**, without first attempting Early Resolution, when the issues raised are complex and clearly require detailed investigation; or the complaint relates to serious, high-risk or high-profile issues.

Following completion of our internal process, if a complainant remains dissatisfied, they can ask the SPSO or one of our awarding bodies to consider their complaint further, and we advise them of this right.

The 2022-23 reporting period provides the tenth full year of data under SPSO's MCHP for the FE sector. This report provides information on:

- the number of complaints we received;
- at what stage we dealt with complaints;
- the time taken to deal with complaints; and
- the outcome of complaints.
- how we learned and made improvements as a result of considering the complaints we received; and
- what categories of complaints we dealt with.

## **Section 2 Key Performance Indicators**

### **Indicator 1 - The total number of complaints received**

Glasgow Clyde College considered a total of 97 complaints during the period 1 August 2022 to 31 July 2023 as follows:

	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>
Stage 1	65	67.0%
Stage 2	28	28.9%
Escalation	4	4.1%

- The figures above show a very slight decrease in the total number of complaints received compared with last academic year; at 97 complaints versus 103 during 2021-22.
- Stage 1 complaints accounted for 67.0% of overall complaints closed, which is a decrease compared with 74.7% in 2021-22.
- 28.9% of the complaints submitted were handled directly at Stage 2, which is considerably up on the 13.6% dealt with at that stage last year. This signifies a rise in the number of complex complaints investigated.
- The number of complaints escalated, decreased from 6.2% in 2020-21 to 4.1%.

### **Indicator 2 - The number and % of complaints at each stage, which were closed within the set timescales of five and 20 working days**

	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>
Stage 1 complaints closed within 5 working days	51	78.5%
Stage 1 complaints not closed with 5 working days	14	21.5%
Stage 2 complaints closed within 20 working days	23	82.1%
Stage 2 complaints not closed within 20 working days	5	17.9%
Escalated complaints closed within 20 working days	4	100.0%
Escalated complaints not closed within 20 working days	0	0.0%

- 51 of the 65 complaints handled at Stage 1 were closed within five working days, equating to 78.5%. This is a decrease compared with last academic year, where 84.4% of complaints handled at Stage 1 were able to be closed within the SPSO timescale.
- 82.1% of complaints handled at Stage 2 met the 20 day target, which again shows a slight decrease compared with last year's 85.7%.
- All four of the Escalated complaints were responded to within 20 working days, which is significantly better than only 8.3% being dealt with within 20 working days during 2021-22\* (\*this figure arose mainly due to the majority of the 2021-22 Escalated complaints being received at the end of the academic year, hence not being able to be responded to until lecturer return in the new term).

### **Indicator 3 - The average time in working days for a full response to complaints at each stage**

	<b>Working days</b>	<b>Working days</b>
Stage 1	244	3.7
Stage 2	484	17.2
Escalated	61	15.2

There was a slight increase in the average length of time taken to close Stage 1 complaints, from 3.4 working days to 3.7, which falls within SPSO's target timescale of five working days. The average Stage 2 response time also fell within SPSO's 20 day target, at 17.2 days, which is an improvement on last year. Escalated complaints also fell within SPSO's 20 days, taking an average of 15.2 days for close out, which compares favourably against the 47.9 day seen in 2021-22.

### **Indicator 4 - The outcome of complaints at each stage**

	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>
Complaints Resolved at Stage 1	31	47.7%
Complaints Upheld at Stage 1	18	27.7%
Complaints Not Upheld at Stage 1	16	24.6%
Complaints Resolved at Stage 2	4	14.3%
Complaints Upheld at Stage 2	10	35.7%
Complaints Not Upheld at Stage 2	14	50.0%
Complaints Resolved after Escalation	1	25.0%
Complaints Upheld after Escalation	0	0.0%
Complaints Not Upheld after Escalation	3	75.0%
Complaints Resolved at all stages	36	37.1%
Complaints Upheld at all stages	28	28.9%
Complaints Not Upheld at all stages	33	34.0%

There was a further increase in the number of complaints being Resolved; rising from 29.1% last academic year to 37.1% this year, which is a positive shift. Fewer complaints were Upheld, dropping from 35.0% last year to 28.9% in 2022-23. The least notable change was in the number of complaints Not Upheld, with 34.0% this academic year compared with the slightly higher 35.9% of complaints Not Upheld during 2022-23. Staff always endeavour to Resolve a complaint to the complainant's satisfaction and will continue to strive towards this outcome during the coming academic year.

### **Section 3 Complaints outcomes and actions taken to improve services**

Monitoring complaints information and the preparation and sharing of regular reports, including monthly and quarterly updates to members of the Senior Leadership Team as well as this annual report, helps to provide Glasgow Clyde College, and the public, with information on how complaints are handled, and used to identify learning.

Glasgow Clyde College uses six main categories (split into 30 further sub-categories) when recording complaints. Appendices 1 and 2 of this report provide further detail on the volume of complaints recorded in each category/sub-category.

The following summarises lessons learned, improvements made, and actions taken as a result of complaints received in each category/sub-category.

#### **C1 Customer Care**

During 2022-23 there were **51** complaints in this category, which is a considerable increase compared with **28** during 2021-22. Learning and actions taken were as follows:

A **Health and Safety** concern was raised by a complainant unhappy that they were injured during a lab experiment due to the lecturer not following protocol. Investigation concluded that salt was added into an experiment despite not being listed on the protocol sheet, and that this may have been a contributing factor in the complainant's reaction during the experiment. Staff within the Science department were immediately informed that salt must not be used in this experiment moving forward.

A **Diversity and Equality** complaint concerned non-blue badge holders parking in accessible parking bays without displaying an appropriate badge. The complainant believed that the College had no process in place for checking this, however it was explained that Campus Officers check at regular intervals, and challenge non badge displaying individuals who are using accessible bays. It was agreed that the Head of Estates would strengthen the message regarding appropriate parking and that persistent offenders would be reported for further action. Another complaint in this subcategory was from a complainant who was unhappy that disciplinary action was raised against them, without taking their medical and mental health issues into consideration. A meeting was arranged between the Curriculum Manager and complainant to discuss their concerns, and an email was subsequently sent to the entire class group, advising them to delete a group chat which may have contributed towards conflicts and negativity amongst the learners.

A College neighbour submitted an **Environmental** complaint regarding lack of information and proactive action/communication by the College in relation to a boundary concern between their property and Anniesland campus. Consequently, a copy of a survey carried out on the boundary wall in January 2023 was forwarded to the complainant, and there was a commitment from the Head of Estates to discussing an agreeable resolution going forward.

## **C1 Customer Care continued**

There was a significant rise in the number of **Staff Conduct** complaints received from students, with 38 complaints logged for reasons including lack of professionalism; poor manner/unsatisfactory tone; lack of empathy; being pressurised to hand work in with no consideration for difficult domestic situation; ignoring personal circumstances; not dealing effectively with a student conduct situation; lack of action regarding bullying by other students; lecturer being too strict; bullying by staff; racism; and inappropriate conduct on social media. The majority of the Staff Conduct complaints received were either Not Upheld, or quickly Resolved, with only seven out of 38 Upheld. Each situation was addressed accordingly, with relevant actions taken including apologies where appropriate. Other actions taken included ensuring tutors were made fully aware of the correct help for at risk students; organising staff training in Cultural/Anti-Racism Awareness, Complaints Handling, Conflict Resolution and Trauma/Nurturing; updating the Report and Support process to ensure it feeds into the College's Complaints Procedure; ensuring that all staff were made aware of the College's Digital and Social Media Guidance; autism training; reporting a student concern over the term Asperger's to the Scottish Funding Council; revising the approach for disciplinary meetings with students to ensure the ratio is 1:1 and 2:2; referral to HR; reminding a lecturer of the need to be more discreet when discussing individual student progress in front of other learners; and reminding staff that a formal approach can be more beneficial than verbal discussion in some instances. In all cases, complainants' concerns were shared with staff, to enable them to reflect on their interactions with the learners, and to make improvements where required.

A number of **Student Conduct** complaints came from College neighbours affected by student vehicles parking either inconsiderately or illegally. In all cases, the complainant was offered an apology and provided with reassurance that the Student Association would be carrying out work with students around respect for neighbouring properties, and that messages would be sent to learners regularly to reinforce the respect message, as well as and the implications of parking illegally. College staff also communicated with councillors, council officials and community wardens regarding illegal parking in the local area. A few complainants were recommended to contact Police Scotland regarding illegal parking. One complainant was advised to contact the Police, as the incident they complained about involved damage to their property, therefore Police Scotland could investigate the issue on their behalf.

Two complaints in the Customer Care category were subcategorised under **Others**; the first relating to management of a student disciplinary situation. Overall the majority of issues raised by the complainant were not upheld, as the formal student disciplinary process had been carried out in accordance with College procedure, however it was agreed that for this particular disciplinary situation, the timeframe involved in moving from Stage 1 to Stage 2 investigation was too quick, and that a longer and more in-depth consultation period may have avoided the requirement for a Stage 2 disciplinary hearing. The Curriculum and Quality Leader recommended that the team undertake additional training in disciplinary investigation as part of their continuous professional development, to ensure that investigation timelines are applied effectively to each individual situation.

The remaining complaint came from a student who had been removed from their placement, and whilst the complaint was complex and took a number of months to reach a conclusion, it was eventually settled when the student was assigned an alternative placement to enable them to complete their qualification.

## **C2 Application, Admission and Progression**

In session 2022-23, Glasgow Clyde College handled 24,386 applications for the August 2022 intake and a further 3,578 in January 2023. From all applications, there were only **seven** complaints received in the **Applications, Admission and Progression** category, all of which fell into the **Application, Admission, Interview, Enrolment and Induction** sub-category. Actions taken and lessons learned were as follows:

One complaint was submitted by the parent of an applicant who was dissatisfied that their autistic dependent did not achieve a place on their course of choice. The Assistant Principal invited the parent/applicant into College to discuss their case, and this resulted in supporting the learner to find a place on a more appropriate course.

Another applicant was unhappy with the Admissions website due to losing parts of their application form including personal statement - despite selecting save and log off, having issues with starting a new application from a windows pc - instead having to use an android phone, and being unable to delete an incorrect qualification entry on the android phone and having to do this from a pc instead. It was confirmed to the applicant that once an application has been submitted, there is no facility for it to be changed, as applications can be picked up for review within seconds of being submitted and a 'loop' of review, re-review could then ensue. It was explained that if anyone needs to update their application after submitting, they must withdraw the original and submit another. The issue of changes not being retained on 'save and log off' was also investigated and a test indicated that there was an issue in some circumstances, therefore there was commitment to remedying this issue urgently.

One applicant was unhappy they were offered a waiting list rather than confirmed place for their chosen course, and following investigation of this complaint, it was agreed that the department would review their admissions and recruitment process in relation to applications sitting at the waiting list stage to ensure all applications are considered and not unintentionally overlooked. This would include updating the guidance and communication offered to internal applicants to ensure clear progression opportunities exist where possible.

Four of the complaints in this category were not upheld and, in each case, it was reiterated to the student why they did not gain a place on their course of choice or were unable to progress further.

## **C3 Course Related**

Complaints in the **Course Related** category accounted for over a third of the complaints received during 2022-23, with **35** complaints handled.

Three complaints were subcategorised within **Learning and Teaching** for reasons including little to no input or explanation from the lecturer - instead being directed to a booklet to learn course content and then redirected to the booklet when help was requested, and instances of poor quality teaching. In each case, the lecturer was asked to reflect on complainant feedback with a view to making improvements going forward.

### **C3 Course Related continued**

Two complaints were subcategorised within **Environment and Resources**, and both were upheld. One complainant was unhappy with the arrangements for delivery of their course during the forced shutdown of Anniesland campus due to unsafe building conditions. An apology was offered to the complainant, and they were assured that the College would be trying to secure consistent and suitable accommodation for the group until such time as the campus was able to reopen safely. The other complainant was unhappy with the classroom booking system at Glasgow Clyde College. It was agreed that the current room booking system is complex, and it was explained to the complainant that the College were in the process of introducing an improved classroom utilisation system, that would lead to more accurate and reliable rooming information.

The majority of **Course Related** complaints responded to, concerned **Course Management**, with 18 complaints handled.

A Course Management complaint was upheld due to two of the six scheduled classes for a subject being cancelled with little notice provided. It was ascertained that staff sicknesses had been notified only on the day of each cancelled session; therefore it had not been possible to organise a replacement lecturer at such short notice. It was agreed that the College had failed to provide the course as described on the website, therefore an apology was offered, and course fees refunded.

A group of complainants were dissatisfied with the conduct of an evening class, specifically that the course was being delivered mainly online. Investigation identified that whilst the class had been advertised as blended (meaning a combination of online and on campus learning), a number of students were struggling with online learning, therefore the Curriculum Manager took this on board and in response, moved the class to fully on campus, which resolved the issue.

Similarly, a complainant was unhappy with the organisation of their course during the previous academic year, for reasons including lack of notification that the course would be blended rather than fully face to face, lack of contingency following long term lecturer absence and poor support leading to an unsuccessful attempt at the final examination. This complaint was not upheld, and the complainant was reminded that due to COVID restrictions, all evening classes had been promoted as blended, and would include a mix of online and face to face classes. It was also explained that the long term lecturer absence was unforeseen. but that the Curriculum Manager had ensured all classes were covered.

One Course Management complaint came from a student who was unhappy with the overall organisation of their programme, and following investigation of the complaint, it was agreed that the Curriculum Manager would provide a timeline and weighting of work to be completed until the end of the course, that lecturers would ensure five minutes at the conclusion of each lesson for Q&A to provide real time support to learners, and that the team would endeavour to provide more timeous responses to emails.

### **C3 Course Related continued**

A number of Course Management complaints came from a group of learners dissatisfied with the management of a number of their units by a lecturer. Specific issues included assessments being poorly organised therefore running into the next block, being rushed through units just to pass assessments, failure to use Canvas in any helpful way, poor use of the Teams platform, and an over dependence on paper, rather than the electronic platforms available for learning and assessments. Investigation concluded that there were issues with the delivery of these subjects, and actions taken as a result included staff training on delivering SQA qualifications; in particular ensuring assessment evidence meets criteria set out in unit specifications, training in internal verification, and training on the effective use of Canvas - focusing on digital resources and assessment submission. A similar complaint in this subcategory was from a student who was dissatisfied with the organisation of one of their classes for reasons including poor use of Canvas and other learning technologies, as well as an inconsistent approach to assessments, grading and providing feedback. It was agreed that certain practices could benefit from improvement, therefore the complainant was reassured that work would be carried out with relevant staff, and that measures would be implemented to rectify the issues raised, such as enhancing the use of technology, ensuring consistent grading, distributing teaching materials, and fostering effective communication strategies going forward.

A complaint was received from a student who was unhappy with the College's decision not to run Year 2 of their HND programme. It was explained that based on recent cuts to College funding, this course was no longer economically viable. The complainant was offered the opportunity to complete their HND at City of Glasgow College, or to gain direct entry into Year 2 of an alternative HND qualification at Glasgow Clyde College within the same curriculum area. A similar complaint was received from a student who was unhappy that Year 2 of their qualification would be delivered at an alternative Glasgow Clyde College campus. It was explained to the complainant that the decision had to be taken due to insufficient student numbers meaning the second year could not be offered at two campuses. A range of measures were offered to assist the student should they choose to continue their studies with Glasgow Clyde College, as well as support being offered should they choose to move to an alternative organisation to complete their HND. Another complainant was unhappy about the change of day for Year 2 of their day release programme as well as poor communication about this and other aspects of the course. It was explained to the student that days can change when a course runs over a two-year period due to factors such as room availability, staff availability and timetables. On this occasion it was not possible to remain with a Friday class therefore it had to be moved to a Thursday for Year 2. Investigation ascertained that there had been several class discussions and correspondences about the change of day, therefore the complaint was not upheld.

One complainant was unhappy that their son was removed from their programme of study because they were late handing in coursework, had missed deadlines and had a few learning outcomes to resit in a couple of modules. It was confirmed to the complainant that their son had not been removed from the course, rather that completion of the group award was now not possible in the current academic year. A development plan was created for the student, who was invited to complete the units agreed within the develop plan during the remainder of the academic year, with the remaining units to be undertaken during next academic session.

### **C3 Course Related continued**

A complaint received related to a student being advised that they could no longer attend their course because they were too young. Investigation found that communication from the College regarding this situation had been very poor, therefore an apology was offered, and the student advised that they could continue undertaking their course of study. In addition there was a commitment to learning from this experience to ensure relevant teams provide a better level of service, with clearer communication regarding entry requirements in the future.

Within the **Assessment, Exams and Certification** sub-category, six complaints were received.

Three upheld complaints were from students unhappy that they had not received their full HND certificate. Investigation highlighted that an administrative error led to the class group not being attached to the SQA Group Award and when this was identified, the students were immediately attached to the award and full certification quickly proceeded.

There was a complaint in the **Assessment, Exams and Certification** subcategory which related to a student being unable to complete an assessment outcome before the end of the academic year, and following investigation, it was agreed that the complainant could have an extension over the summer break, with work to be submitted at the start of the new academic year with no requirement to re-enrol for the unit.

One complainant was unhappy that they did not achieve their full group award due to failing a unit, and whilst their complaint was not upheld; in order to help them achieve their qualification, they were offered the opportunity to return to the course to undertake the outstanding unit at the start of the following academic session.

The remaining complainant was unhappy that they had not been given feedback on the Higher examination they undertook last academic year to enable them to improve their chances of passing this year. It was explained to the complainant that the College could not provide further information on their performance in the exam due to it being externally assessed by the awarding body SQA. The complainant was however reissued a copy of their marked prelim paper, which contained detailed feedback, to assist them with areas for improvement should they attempt the exam again.

The remaining six **Course Related** complaints fell within the **Others** subcategory.

A complaint in this subcategory came from a student concerned that ASOS would affect their conditional offer for university. To resolve this, the Curriculum Manager forwarded a Completion Certificate in respect of the HND to the university, and the Curriculum Assistant Principal contacted all universities for whom Glasgow Clyde have articulation agreements to confirm that they would be converting all of their conditional offers to unconditional offers.

### **C3 Course Related continued**

One complainant was unhappy that they did not receive a response to an enquiry regarding the content of one of the advertised leisure courses. An apology was offered as the course administrator was unable to provide sufficient information on programme content at the time of the complainant's initial enquiry. The course lecturer subsequently provided feedback and offered the complainant support in finding a course which suited their specific requirements.

Another complainant was unhappy that the Level 2 BSL course delivered at Glasgow Clyde is not Signature certified, thus felt it not to be a transferable qualification. It was explained to the complainant that their credential is a certified and recognised SQA qualification at SCQF Level 5, which comes from the recognised qualification authority of Scotland, and that Signature qualifications are delivered in England and recognised and certified by Ofqual, which is the English private qualifications regulator.

One complaint related to a student being unable to find employment or a placement after completing their course. The complaint was not upheld, and the complainant was advised to create a 'My World of Work' account via Skills Development Scotland and was provided with links to some industry trade bodies for Scotland, as well as links to other careers sites.

A complaint was received from a leisure class applicant who was charged twice for their course. Investigation ascertained that the applicant had accidentally pressed the 'Buy Now' button twice, and when this was realised, the applicant was immediately refunded.

The remaining complaint came from a former student who had been suspended last academic year for comments they made about Muslims and Homophobia. It was explained to the complainant that College Procedure was followed in suspending them pending investigation, and due to the offensive nature of their comments, which were a breach of the Student Code of Conduct. The context for making offensive and inflammatory comments was deemed to be inappropriate and unacceptable, therefore this complaint was not upheld.

### **Category 4 Services**

There were three complaints in the **Services** category, one related to Finance, and the other two concerned Bursary.

Ae **Finance** complaint was received from a complainant who was unhappy that were unable to pay for their evening leisure course in instalments. Following discussion with the Finance Manager, the complaint was resolved when a payment plan was agreed to enable the learner to make regular payments over a set period of time.

#### **Category 4 Services continued**

The two complaints subcategorised within **Funding or Bursary** were from complainants who were unhappy with issues they experienced whilst applying for their bursary payments. It was explained to both students that their bursary application forms had been returned to them for more information, and that the requested information had not yet been provided, therefore the Student Awards department were unable to assess their eligibility. The students were reminded what information was outstanding and advised that they could provide this information at any time to enable their applications to be assessed.

#### **Category 5 Facilities**

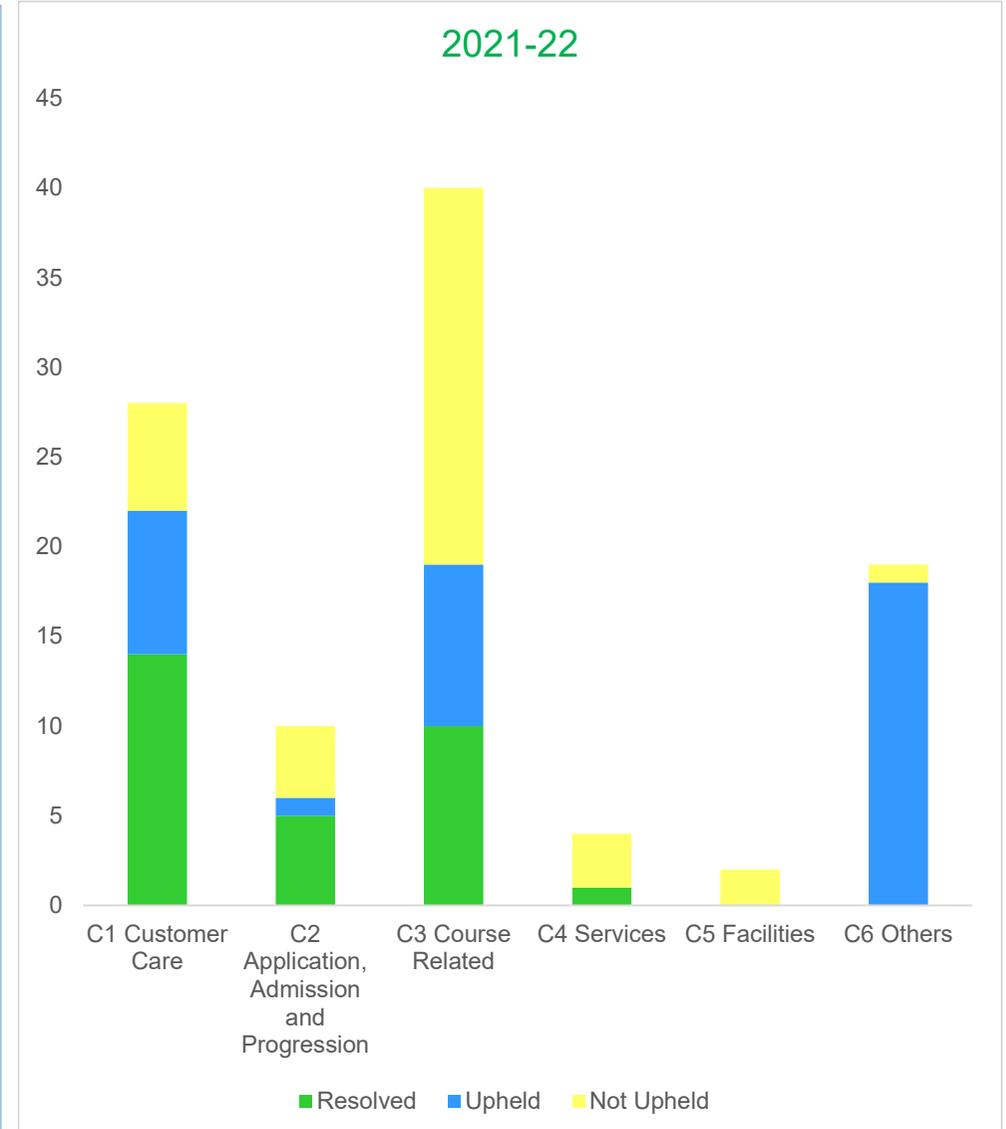
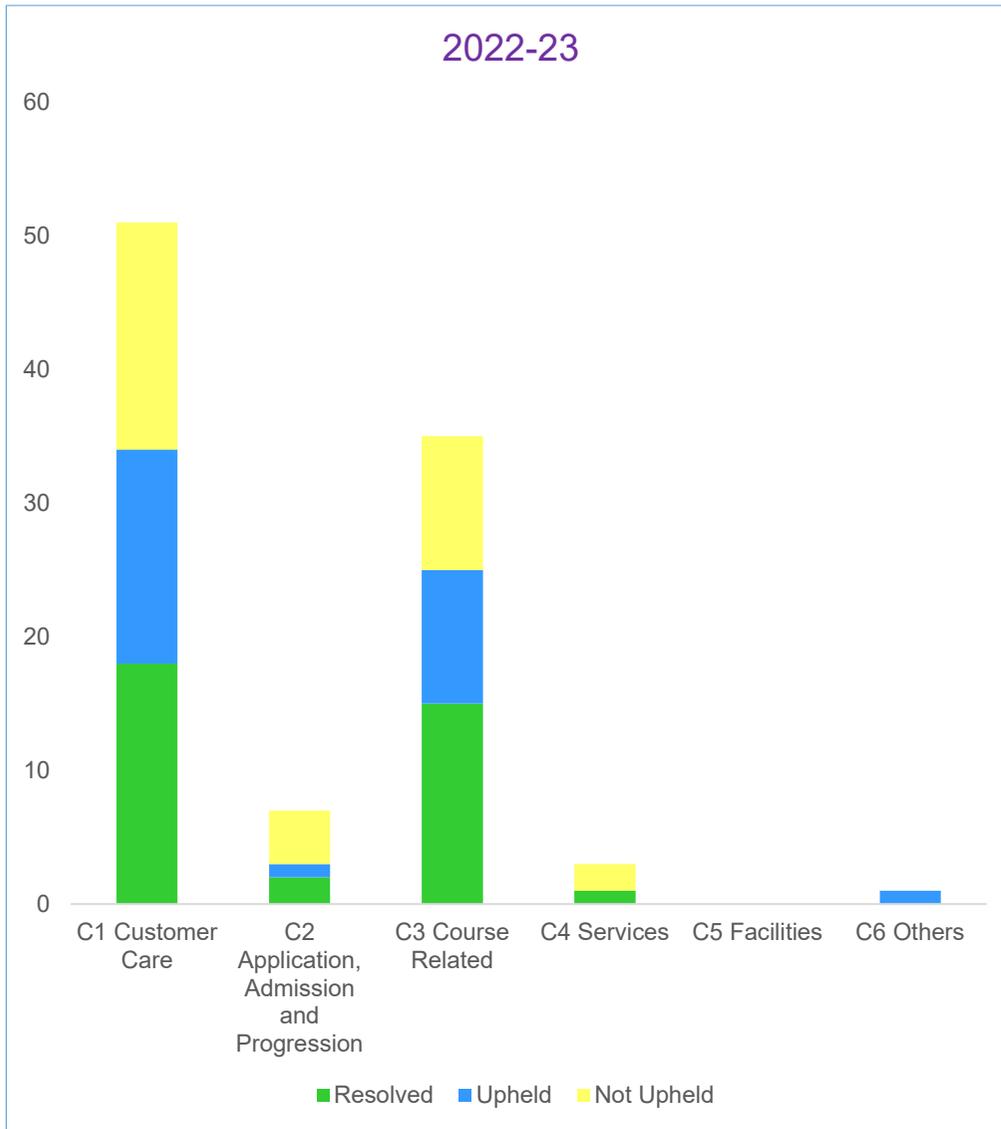
There were no complaints in the Facilities category during the 2022-23 academic year.

#### **Category 6 Others**

The complaint in the **Others** category came from a former student who was unhappy with poor communication from the College during a period of lecturer industrial action at the end of the 2021-22 academic year. The student was offered an apology for disruption to their learning as a result of the strike action.

## Section 4 – Breakdown of complaints

### Appendix 1 - Complaints by Category – 2022-23 vs 2021-22



## Appendix 2 - Complaints by Sub-category – 2022-23

