

Complaint Handling Procedure Annual Report 2019-20

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1. Introduction and Overview

Glasgow Clyde College always aims to provide the highest possible quality of service, but we recognise that there are times when we fail to 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.

Scotland's public sector has a duty to respond positively to complaints. Glasgow Clyde College tries to resolve complaints to the satisfaction of the customer wherever possible. Where this isn't possible, complainants are provided with a clear response to each of their points of complaint. We try to respond as quickly as we can and on the spot where possible. Not every complaint is upheld, but they are all addressed.

Our Complaints Handling Procedure is based on the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman's (SPSO's) Model Complaints Handling Procedure (MCHP), which was first developed by experienced College Complaint Handlers, working closely with the SPSO. The Procedure has two stages and the majority of complaints are handled at Stage 1. If however a complainant remains dissatisfied after Stage 1, they can request that we look at their complaint at Stage 2. If the complaint is complex enough to require a detailed investigation, we put the complaint into Stage 2 immediately. Following completion of our complaints 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 2019-20 reporting period provides the seventh full year of data under SPSO's first edition MCHP for the FE sector, which was published in August 2013. This annual report enables Glasgow Clyde College to:

- comply with the national requirement to report against SPSO Performance Indicators (PIs);
- internally inform management to help us learn from complaints and improve services; and
- externally provide information and feedback to the public.

2. Revised Model Complaints Handling Procedure

SPSO, in consultation with Scotland's public sectors has developed a revised MCHP, which was published in April 2020. The new edition includes a core text, which is consistent across all public services, with some additional text and examples specific to each sector. This revised MCHP will be adopted by Glasgow Clyde College by the target date of April 2021.

The revised MCHP allows a standard approach to handling complaints across Scotland's public services, as far as is possible. It aims to help us 'get it right first time' with quicker, simpler and more streamlined complaints handling with local, early responses by capable, well-trained staff.

3. 2019-20 Performance Indicators P1-P6

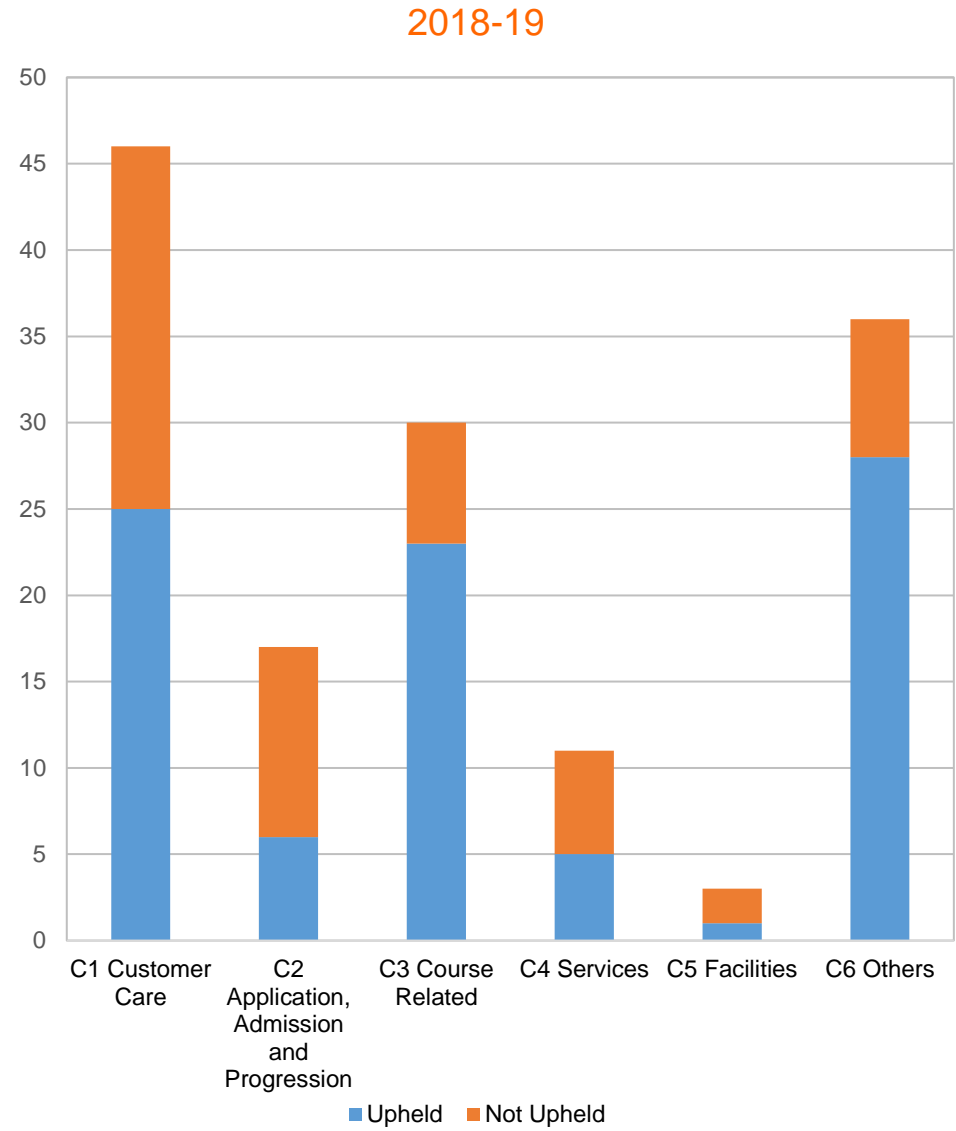
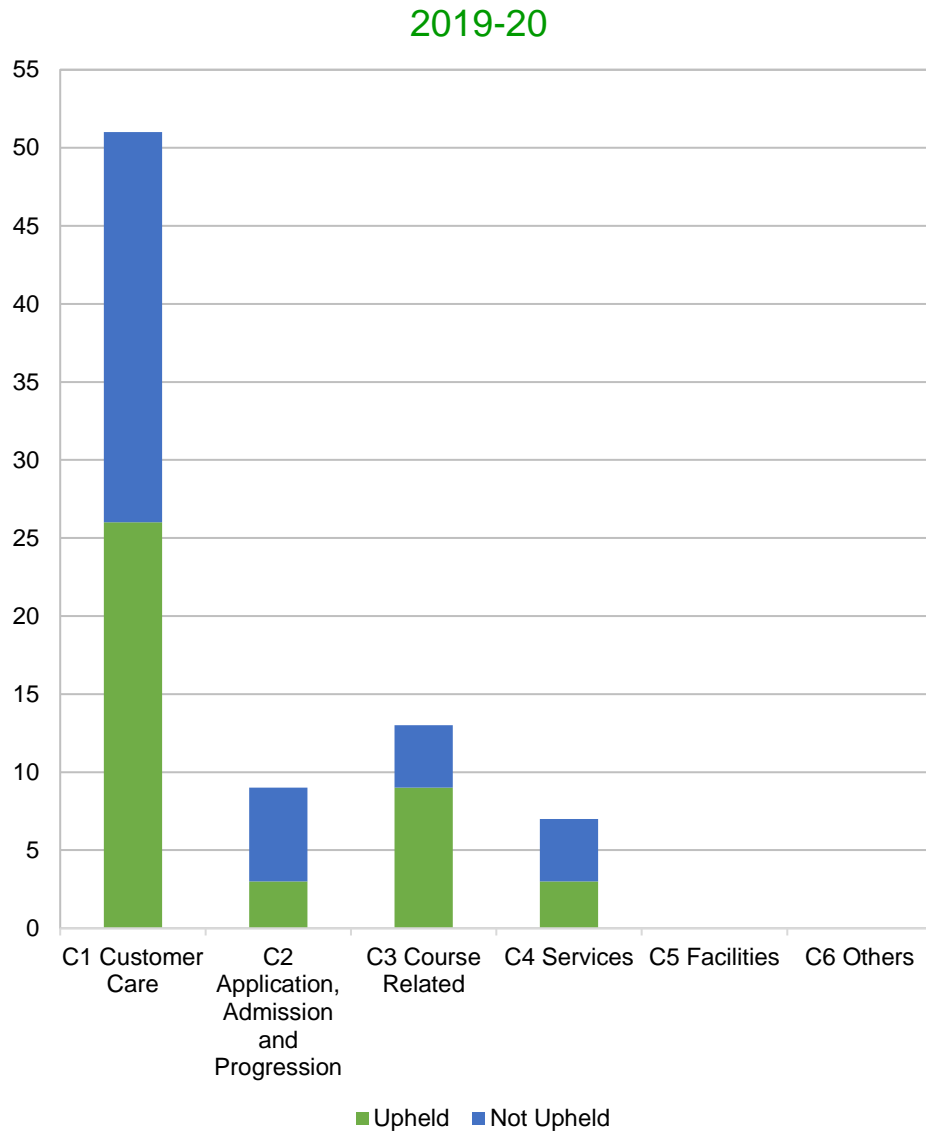
1.0 Total number of complaints received and complaints received per 100 population*	2019-20		2018-19	
Number of complaints received	80		143	
Number of complaints received per 100 population as a %	0.7%		1.2%	
2.0 Number of complaints closed at each stage and as a % of complaints closed				
Number of complaints closed at Stage 1 and % of total closed	64	80.0%	122	85.3%
Number of complaints closed at Stage 2 and % of total closed	10	12.5%	13	9.1%
Number of complaints closed after Escalation and % of total closed	6	7.5%	8	5.6%
3.0 Number of complaints upheld and not upheld at each stage and as a % at each stage				
Stage 1				
Number and % of complaints upheld at Stage 1	39	60.9%	83	68.0%
Number and % of complaints not upheld at Stage 1	25	39.1%	39	32.0%
Stage 2				
Number and % of complaints upheld at Stage 2	2	20.0%	0	0.0%
Number and % of complaints not upheld at Stage 2	8	80.0%	13	100.0%
Escalated				
Number and % of complaints upheld after Escalation	0	0.0%	5	62.5%
Number and % of complaints not upheld after Escalation	6	100.0%	3	37.5%
4.0 Total working days and average time in working days to close complaints at each stage				
Total working days / ave. time in working days to close complaints at Stage 1	273	4.3	401	3.3
Total working days / ave. time in working days to close complaints at Stage 2	212	21.2	269	20.7
Total working days / ave. time in working days to close complaints after escalation	92	15.3	151	18.9

*This number is recorded as average student enrolments during 2019-20.

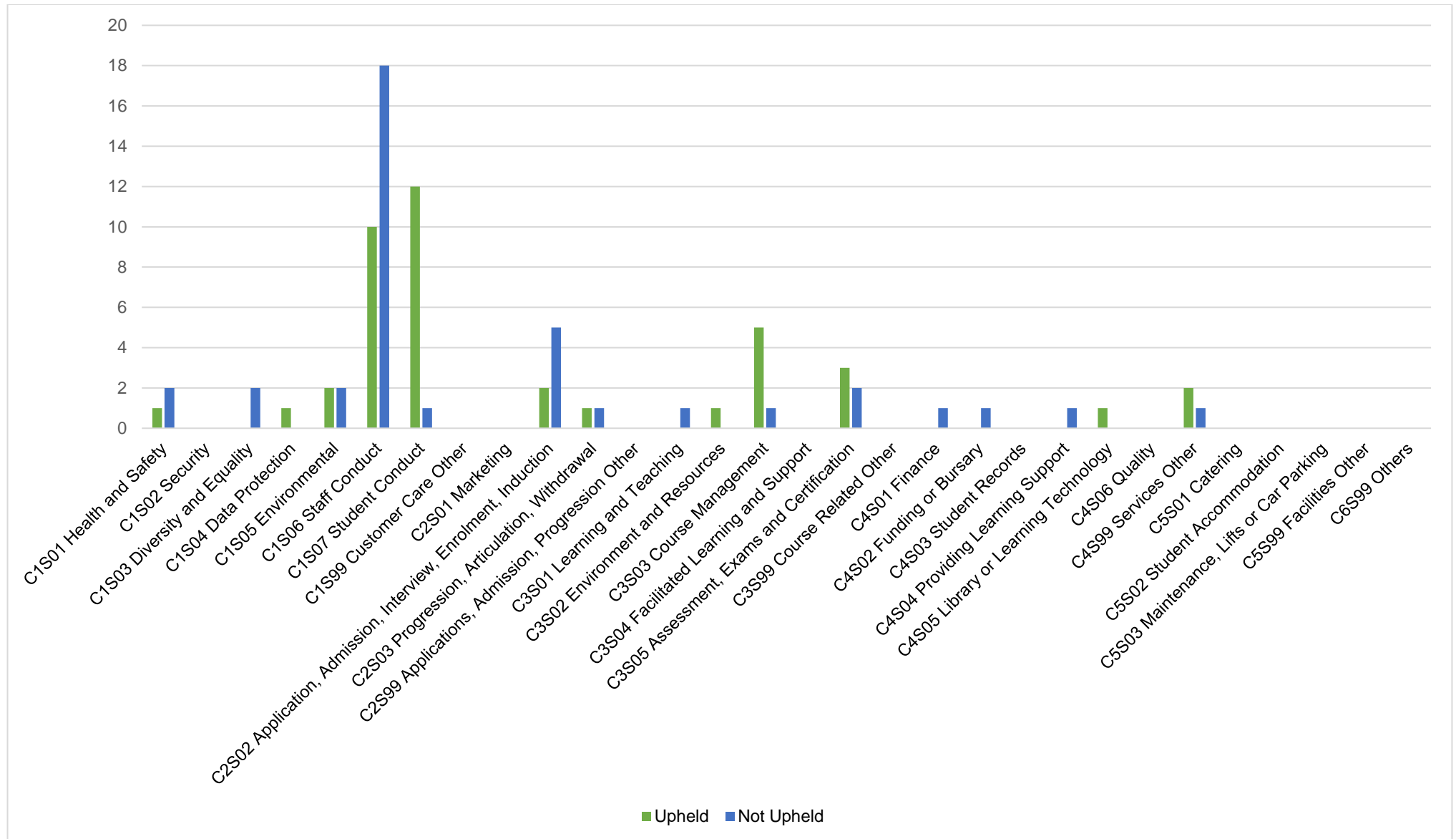
5.0 Number and % of complaints closed within set timescales		2019-20		2018-19	
Number and % of Stage 1 complaints closed within 5 working days		54	84.4%	111	91.0%
Number and % of Stage 1 complaints not closed with 5 working days		10	15.6%	11	9.0%
Number and % of Stage 2 complaints closed within 20 working days		8	80.0%	9	69.2%
Number and % of Stage 2 complaints not closed within 20 working days		2	20.0%	4	30.8%
Number and % of Escalated complaints closed within 20 working days		6	100.0%	7	87.5%
Number and % of Escalated complaints not closed within 20 working days		0	0.0%	1	12.5%
6.0 Number and % of complaints closed at each stage where extensions have been authorised					
Number and % of Stage 1 complaints closed within 10 working days (ext.)		10	100.0%	11	100.0%
Number and % of Stage 1 complaints not closed within 10 working days (ext.)		0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Number and % of Stage 2 complaints closed within 40 working days (ext.)		2	100.0%	4	100.0%
Number and % of Stage 2 complaints not closed within 40 working days (ext.)		0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Number and % of Escalated complaints closed within 40 working days (ext.)		NA		1	100.0%
Number and % of Escalated complaints not closed within 40 working days (ext.)		NA		0	0.0%

PI	Key Observations
1.0	The College received significantly fewer complaints during 2019-20 than the previous year, at 80 compared with 143. This may be attributable to Glasgow Clyde College entering a period of lockdown from 18 March 2020 due to the global COVID-19 pandemic.
2.0	A smaller % of complaints were investigated and closed out at Stage 1 during 2019-20 than last academic year; at 80.0% compared with 85.3%.
3.0	In 2019-20, 51.2% of complaints received were upheld, which is a decrease of over 10% compared with 61.5% the previous year.
4.0	There was an increase in the average length of time taken to respond to Stage 1 complaints, however the average remained within the 5 working day target requested by SPSO. All Escalated complaints were responded to within 20 working days and the average time taken to respond improved in comparison with last academic year. However the Stage 2 response time remained above the SPSO 20 day target at 21.2 days average, which is similar to 2018-19.
5.0	The % of Stage 1 complaints closed within five days worsened at 84.4% compared with 91.0% the previous year, however response within the 20 day target for both Stage 2 and Escalated complaints improved on average compared with 2018-19.
6.0	All complaints requiring an extension were closed out within the respective Stage 1 - 10 day or Stage 2 - 40 day target, requested by SPSO, as they were last academic year.

4. Complaints by Category – 2019-20 vs. 2018-19



5. 2019-20 Complaints by Sub-category



6. 2019-20 Themes and Improvements

C1 Customer Care

As with previous years, the largest number of complaints received during the 2019-20 academic year related to **Customer Care**, and despite the overall number of complaints reducing compared with previous years, there were actually more complaints in this category than last year with 51 Customer Care complaints received. Of those, 26 were upheld.

The upheld **Health and Safety** complaint related to the timing of the weekly fire alarm test - Wednesday at 10am. The student explained that this test interrupted group sessions in class leading to loss of concentration and momentum, as well as disrupting the group dynamic. The student was informed that the timing of the alarm is deliberately set to ensure the maximum number of staff and students recognise the sound and would know to leave the building in the event of a required evacuation, however the timing was subsequently reconsidered and a less disruptive time of 12.30pm was agreed.

The complaint which was upheld in the **Data Protection** category arose as a result of an email being sent in error, which exposed the email addresses of around 200 other students. The investigation concluded that the email had been recalled immediately upon recognition of the error and that although a data breach had taken place, the College would not require reporting this to the ICO or communicating it to the individuals involved, as it was felt that contacting those affected could have a detrimental effect, resulting in undue distress. In order to prevent this from happening again, applicable staff were provided with refresher training on the use of Bcc for emails to ensure a best practice approach to data protection.

Two **Environmental** complaints were upheld. The first related to the lack of hygiene in a disabled access toilet; specifically the length of time between emptying the hygiene product disposal bin. It was ascertained that there had been a breakdown in service from the College's external contractor, meaning that the bin had been missed from the weekly uplift. Going forward, the Cleaning Supervisor was tasked with checking the applicable bins throughout the campus following the weekly service, to ensure that no bins are overlooked. The second complaint arose as a result of a student being questioned about entering a communal changing room area to use the toilet. It was established that the changing room in question is intended for use by Beauty and Complementary Therapy students only, to allow them to change or shower between treatments. The individual was identified not to be a student of the department, therefore was asked by a member of staff to use an alternative toilet. The complaint was upheld as there was no signage to make it clear that the changing room area was for use by Beauty and Complementary Therapy students only, and temporary signage was immediately displayed to clarify this. Keypad locks were also ordered to discourage entry by non-Beauty and Complementary Therapy students in the future, thus avoiding reoccurrence.

28 **Staff Conduct** complaints were made during 2019-20, and of these, 10 were upheld. Reasons for complaints included poor responsiveness to repeat requests, failure to appropriately deal with student conduct, improper use of social media and the general manner of some staff members. Actions taken in response to these complaints included reminding applicable staff about customer service standards or appropriate conduct, including the types of language which may cause offence to learners and reminding staff about the appropriateness of what they are posting on social media, particularly when they are representing themselves in association with Glasgow Clyde College.

C1 Customer Care continued

Nine complaints regarding **Student Conduct**, which had been received from members of the wider community were upheld. Issues highlighted were mainly in connection with inconsiderate parking or students loitering, smoking and littering at private residences. In response to these complaints, some actions taken included involving the College's Student Association (GCCSA) in litter picking out with the College campus, as well as promoting the 'Stop, Think Consider' campaign, which was contextualised in 2019-20 to address a range of concerns that members of the community had expressed to the College. This campaign included specific inputs and presentations from external agencies such as Police Scotland. Three complaints were also upheld in relation to the improper use of social media by a Glasgow Clyde College student. In response, the College logged the issues as potential Hate Crime activity on the Police Scotland website. It was also stipulated that a risk assessment would be provided for the student should they return to Glasgow Clyde College to continue studies.

C2 Applications, Admission and Progression

In session 2019-20, Glasgow Clyde College received and handled in excess of 24,000 applications. Nine complaints were received in the **Applications, Admission and Progression** category and three of these were upheld, which is a significant reduction compared with previous years.

Two complaints were upheld in the **Application, Admission, Interview, Enrolment or Induction** sub-category, and it was established that on both occasions an administrative error had led to an admissions offer being made mistakenly. In each case the student was provided with guidance on contacting the Student Advice team to discuss their options regarding suitable courses with places remaining.

The other complaint upheld in this category related to a **Progression** issue, and it arose as a result of a student being misinformed about the requirement to complete a new application form, which was found not to be necessary when progressing from the Transitions course they had recently completed. This error led to the student being told that the course they had applied for was full and that their application would not be considered. The student was consequently offered an unconditional place on their chosen programme.

There were also some lessons learned as a result of complaints which were not upheld. One complainant was unhappy that their photo had been taken during enrolment without their explicit consent. It was explained to the student that having a photo taken is not a matter of consent, but that they are required to provide this data in order to manage the safety and security of staff and students on campuses. A lesson was however learned, in that individuals should be made aware of this requirement more overtly, prior to their photograph being taken during the enrolment process.

Another complaint highlighted the lack of awareness of some staff that paper application forms can be accepted in certain circumstances e.g. supported learning needs students who experience difficulties completing the online form or prisoners who don't have the necessary internet access to enable them to apply online. Appropriate staff were reminded of these specific exclusions.

C3 Course Related

There were significantly fewer complaints in the **Course Related** category with 13 in 2019-20 compared with 30 last academic year. Of the complaints received, nine were upheld.

The complaint upheld in the **Environment or Resources** sub-category related to essential software not functioning on some College PCs and nothing being done to remedy the problem. Investigation established that a programme installed by the ICT department was being corrupted on some student accounts, and that the lecturer to whom this fault was reported, had not logged the issue on the College's ICT helpdesk, instead had mentioned it in passing to one of the technicians. The issue was subsequently resolved, and the member of staff reminded that faults must be formally logged on the helpdesk to enable the ICT department to action requests in a timely and traceable manner.

Five complaints upheld in the Course Related category fell into the **Course Management** sub-category. One complainant was unhappy with a short notice change of evening for their course and with failure of staff to respond to email enquiries about this. It was found that an administrative error led to students being told that their course would be delivered on a Wednesday rather than Tuesday evening. It was also established that the part time lecturer had not activated an out of office alert to notify potential communicators of their working pattern, leading to the failure to respond to emails on this matter. The lecturer was reminded that an out of office message must be displayed during non-working periods, providing an alternative email address, to ensure that urgent communications are brought to the attention of an appropriate other. Similarly, another complainant was unhappy with late cancellation of a leisure course, and following investigation it was agreed that it must be made more obvious to future applicants that courses may be cancelled at short notice if there are insufficient numbers to run the programme. The third complainant was unhappy that she was not invited to the College graduation ceremony despite achieving the requisite units to complete the HN qualification. Investigation showed that the student was an infill learner and that an administrative oversight had led to the individual being omitted when graduation lists were arranged. It was agreed that prior to graduation, staff must undertake a suitable check of all class lists, including infill, to ensure that all eligible students are invited to attend the ceremony. The remaining two complaints related to poor organisation leading to classroom changes. It was ascertained that the avoidable disruption occurred due to an unauthorised change of room by a member of staff to accommodate a larger group of students, within the room allocated to the complainants' class. This unauthorised change rendered the Rooming Timetable inaccurate, as it had not been updated to reflect the change. Staff were reminded to communicate any rooming changes through the accepted channels to ensure the accuracy of the master Rooming Timetable as a reference document.

There were three complaints upheld in the **Assessment, Exams and Certification** sub-category, the first relating to outstanding unit results not being entered to the College system following the long term absence of a lecturer. It was agreed that a formal process must be established for managing outstanding unit results, where there is likely to be prolonged absence of a member of staff.

C3 Course Related continued

An issue in the Assessment, Exams and Certification sub-category was highlighted by a complainant who did not receive their full award, due to being short of a credit. Investigation determined that the member of staff responsible for the programme, was in the process of having a new unit added to the HN framework, but subsequently left employment with the College. This led to the addition of the unit being overlooked, thus leaving the learner without enough credits to attain the full award. This complaint highlighted the need to establish a process for auditing outstanding tasks, where a member of staff leaves employment, in order that such mistakes cannot occur. The final complaint upheld in this category was from a complainant who was unhappy with a proposed delay in certification, and the requirement to sit an additional exam in August 2020, having already undertaken additional remote tasks to demonstrate competence during the COVID lockdown. It was found that the Awarding Body had failed to supply full qualification guidance until after students had been asked to undertake the extra assessments, which effectively would not count towards achievement of the certificate. The College contested this and the Awarding Body agreed that the additional work completed by learners remotely would be counted towards the qualification, thus enabling certification to proceed as scheduled.

C4 Services

Of the seven complaints received in the **Services** category, three were upheld this academic year. Two upheld complaints related to the mishandling of PVG applications by the College, leading to delays in students being able to undertake placement. In one case, it was found that Disclosure Scotland required some additional information from the applicant, however the department handling the application failed to notify the individual of this, leading to the application timeframe lapsing. The other case involved a student with a prior PVG number, who had been advised to complete the wrong application form. It was agreed that there must be improvements in the PVG administrative process to ensure that where information requested is not supplied by students, a timely reminder is sent to them to check on outstanding information. In addition, consideration would be given to asking students who have had a previous scheme reference number to complete both a 'New' and 'Existing' form, to reduce the possibility of a lengthy delay. It was also agreed that the time bound nature of supplying information for PVG applications must be stressed to all applicants.

The remaining complaint concerned the lack of availability of library services for evening class students at Anniesland Campus. It was agreed that issues with staffing meant that at some points during the week, the library had been unable to maintain normal opening hours. This was unavoidable, however it was recognised that students should have received information and signposting to other campuses earlier.

C5 Facilities

There were no complaints received in this category.

C6 Others

There were no complaints received in this category.

7. Performance Indicator 7 - Complainant Satisfaction

The College requests formal feedback from complainants regarding their satisfaction with the complaints process, via a follow up survey after the complaint has been closed out. In 2019-20 there were 16 responses received to surveys emailed (20% of complainants). From these responses:

- **88%** found it *'easy to get information about how to make a complaint'* (vs. **77%** in 2018-19 and **61%** in 2017-18)
- **94%** found it *'easy to make their complaint'* (vs. **77%** in 2018-19 and **75%** in 2018-19)
- **75%** felt that their *'complaint was taken seriously'* (vs. **57%** in 2018-19 and **36%** in 2017-18)
- **69%** felt that their *'complaint was properly investigated'* (vs. **57%** in 2018-19 and **21%** in 2017-18)
- **63%** felt that *'the response received addressed the content of the complaint'* (vs. **67%** in 2018-19 and **36%** in 2017-18)
- **94%** felt that they were *'dealt with courteously at all times'* (vs. **67%** in 2018-19 and **61%** in 2017-18)
- **81%** agreed that they were *'happy with the time taken to respond to the complaint'* (vs. **67%** in 2018-19 and **93%** in 2017-18)

For the most part, the above responses demonstrate that complainants are more satisfied overall with the handling of their complaint than in previous years, however as always, there are still improvements to be made, particularly in relation to ensuring that complainants are provided with a full and thorough response, which addresses all aspects of their complaint.

8. Performance Indicator 8 - Learning from Complaints

Monitoring complaints information and the preparation and sharing of regular reports, including this annual report, help to provide Glasgow Clyde College, and the public, with information on how complaints are handled and used to identify learning. The Performance Indicators covered in this report provide a tool that can be used to judge objectively how well complaints are managed and how they inform service improvement activity.

9. SPSO

SPSO informed Glasgow Clyde College that they had been asked to review two complaints handled by us during 2019-20. SPSO felt that in both cases the College response had been reasonable and that there was no evidence to demonstrate any fault or failure in how the complaints were handled, therefore they did not take either complaint forward.