



Complaint Handling Procedure Annual Report 2023-24

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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 2023-24 reporting period provides the eleventh 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;
- 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 108 complaints during the period 1 August 2023 to 31 July 2024 as follows:

	Number	%
Stage 1	80	74.1%
Stage 2	23	21.3%
Escalation	5	4.6%

- The figures above show an increase in the total number of complaints received compared with last academic year; at 108 complaints versus 97 during 2022-23.
- Stage 1 complaints accounted for 74.1% of overall complaints closed, which is an increase compared with 67.0% in 2022-23.
- 21.3% of the complaints submitted were handled directly at Stage 2, which is down on the 28.9% dealt with at that stage last academic year, therefore a drop in the number of complex complaints investigated.
- The number of complaints escalated increased slightly from 4.1% in 2022-23 to 4.6%.

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

	Number	%
Stage 1 complaints closed within 5 working days	75	93.8%
Stage 1 complaints not closed with 5 working days	5	6.2%
Stage 2 complaints closed within 20 working days	16	69.6%
Stage 2 complaints not closed within 20 working days	7	30.4%
Escalated complaints closed within 20 working days	5	100.0%
Escalated complaints not closed within 20 working days	0	0.0%

- 75 of the 80 complaints handled at Stage 1 were closed within five working days, equating to 93.8%. This is a marked improvement on last academic year, when only 78.5% of complaints handled at Stage 1 were able to be closed within the SPSO requested timescale.
- 69.6% of complaints handled at Stage 2 met the 20 day target, which is a decrease compared with last year's 82.1%. However, it's worth noting that four complaints were raised after lecturing staff has finished for summer leave and could not be investigated until their return in August 2024. This extended the timescale for responding to complaints at this stage significantly.
- All five Escalated complaints were answered within 20 working days, which was also the case with escalated complaints last year.

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

	Working days	Working days
Stage 1	262	3.3
Stage 2	395	17.1
Escalated	72	4.8

There was a slight decrease in the average length of time taken to close Stage 1 complaints, from 3.7 working days to 3.3, which falls within SPSO's target timescale of five working days. The average Stage 2 response time fell within SPSO's 20 day target, at 17.1 days, which is a marginal improvement on 17.2 days last academic year. Likewise, the average response time for escalated complaints also fell within SPSO's target 20 days, taking an average of 4.8 days for close out, which is a significant decrease compared with 15.2 days in 2022-23. These figures clearly demonstrate the responsiveness of individuals investigating complaints at Glasgow Clyde College.

Indicator 4 - The outcome of complaints at each stage

	Number	%
Complaints Resolved at Stage 1	34	42.5%
Complaints Upheld at Stage 1	26	32.5%
Complaints Partially Upheld at Stage 1	1	1.2%
Complaints Not Upheld at Stage 1	19	23.8%
Complaints Resolved at Stage 2	5	21.7%
Complaints Upheld at Stage 2	1	4.4%
Complaints Partially Upheld at Stage 2	8	34.8%
Complaints Not Upheld at Stage 2	9	39.1%
Complaints Resolved after Escalation	2	40.0%
Complaints Upheld after Escalation	0	0.0%
Complaints Partially Upheld after Escalation	0	0.0%
Complaints Not Upheld after Escalation	3	60.0%
Complaints Resolved at all stages	41	38.0%
Complaints Upheld at all stages	27	25.0%
Complaints Partially Upheld at all stages	9	8.3%
Complaints Not Upheld at all stages	31	28.7%

Indicator 4 - The outcome of complaints at each stage continued

There number of complaints being Resolved remained roughly consistent with last academic year at around 38%. Slightly fewer complaints were 'Fully' Upheld, versus 2022-23, however a number of complex complaints with several elements were 'Partially' Upheld, which is an outcome category which does not normally require being employed. This skews the figure slightly. There was also a slight drop in the number of complaints 'Fully' Not Upheld, with 28.7 % this academic year compared with 34.0% during 2022-23, however this figure is again slightly skewed due to the nine complaints which were Partially Upheld.

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 subcategories) when recording complaints. Appendices 1 and 2 of this report provide further detail on the volume of complaints recorded in each category/subcategory.

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

C1 Customer Care

During the 2023-24 academic year there were 21 complaints in this category, which is a considerable decrease compared with 51 during 2022-23. Learning and actions taken were as follows:

A **Diversity and Equality** concern was raised by the parent of a student with a number of health conditions. Following investigation it was agreed that in addition to the existing support the student was being offered, additional strategies would be implemented to further support them. This enabled the complaint to be resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant.

An **Environmental** complaint came from a neighbour who was unhappy with a noisy gritter machine being operated on College grounds at 4.32am. It was explained that gritting is activated by a Met Office low temperature warning which automatically alerts the service provider to attend the campus. Unfortunately, the College is unable to choose a specific time slot for when the gritting is carried out. It was however confirmed that the service provider had been notified of the complainant's concerns and asked to consider this going forward.

There were 18 **Staff Conduct** complaints handled, which is a significant drop compared with 38 during academic year 2022-23. Reasons for complaint included: staff showing favouritism/providing some learners with an unfair advantage; angry, inappropriate, rude or condescending behaviour; inappropriate choice of language; and poor interactions with a transgender individual and a learner with a mental health issue. Actions taken included apologies where appropriate; requesting that a teaching team review topics/alternative viewpoint teaching approaches to ensure teaching is inclusive and respectful of diverse perspectives; increasing the use of digital technologies; reminding staff to ensure students are comfortable with the environment when private/one to one meetings are being conducted; requesting a team take a more nurturing approach when dealing with learners exhibiting signs of anxiety; updating information on the College website; improving staff interviewing skills and considering specialist transgender training to promote awareness and understanding of transgender students' needs.

C1 Customer Care continued

There was only one **Student Conduct** complaint this academic year, which is a vast improvement on previous years, and it was from a College neighbour, who was unhappy with inconsiderate parking by Glasgow Clyde College students. An apology was offered, and a message was sent to all students to emphasise that they must be mindful of local residents, and park only in designated areas. Over the past five years, GCCSA have carried out awareness raising campaigns related to respecting College neighbours, and this appears to be paying off with a reduction in Student Conduct complaints from neighbours of our campuses.

C2 Application, Admission and Progression

In session 2023-24, Glasgow Clyde College handled 24,287 applications for the August 2023 intake and a further 3,307 in January 2024. From all applications, there were 18 complaints received in the **Applications, Admission and Progression** category. Actions taken and lessons learned were as follows:

There were 12 complaints recorded in the **Application, Admission, Interview, Enrolment and Induction** subcategory. One applicant was unhappy that they were invited to interview for a course which was already full at the time of the interview. It was explained to the complainant that due to the popularity of the programme, all potential applicants for the course are interviewed, including some for waiting list places – because often places become available for applicants on the waiting list. This wasn't the case this academic year as all applicants who accepted their offer took up their place. An apology was offered as the applicant was not aware that they were interviewing for a waiting list place until they arrived for interview. There was commitment to working with the Admissions department to ensure that for future reference, this is made clear when the interview invite is sent.

A complainant was unhappy with the admissions process overall, particularly in relation to lack of feedback for various courses applied for, and investigation confirmed that there had been a delay in sending feedback to the complainant on their applications. The complaint was resolved when a place was secured for the applicant on their preferred course, enabling them to start the following day. Another complainant was dissatisfied with admissions process overall and it was confirmed that there had been some administrative errors with their application. This was immediately resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant by offering them a guaranteed interview for a place on their chosen programme.

A complaint was received from an applicant who was rejected due to being 15 years old, thus legally unable to operate the machinery required to successfully complete the course. This complaint was upheld as the College website did not clearly highlight the age requirement, and this was quickly rectified following receipt of the complaint. The complainant was offered an apology and signposted to a suitable programme, which would be a pathway towards gaining a place on their course of choice upon turning 16.

C2 Application, Admission and Progression continued

A few complaints originated from a group of current learners who did not gain a place on the course they had applied for. In each case it was ascertained that the applicant did not meet the entry requirements, however all four complaints were quickly resolved to the satisfaction of the complainants by ensuring they were enrolled on programmes appropriate to their academic ability.

One complainant (who had struggled with the curriculum during the 2023-24 academic year) was unhappy they could not reenrol on another full time qualification for 2024-25. An agreement was reached that the applicant be allowed to undertake a HNC qualification part time over two years, to make the curriculum more manageable for them.

There were eight complaints related to **Progression, Articulation, Withdrawal** issues. In two of these cases, the complainants were unable to progress due to poor attendance and/or lack of progress on their current courses and their complaints were not upheld. Both students were however offered the opportunity to enrol on alternative programmes, to provide them with a more suitable interim step towards achieving places on their preferred courses. The remaining six complaints came from students who were unable to progress from a part time HNC to a part time HND, due to the part time HND programme being discontinued. Whilst the College was unable to reinstate the part time HND option, there was a commitment to finding progression options for each affected learner either into the HND full time course at Glasgow Clyde, or to other Colleges/Organisations.

C3 Course Related

Complaints in the **Course Related** category accounted for over a third of the complaints received during 2022-23, with 40 complaints handled.

Four complaints within the Course Related category concerned **Learning and Teaching**.

The first was from a student who felt they had not received the amount of teaching they paid for because of industrial action and disruption caused by building works. Investigation ascertained that disruption to this individual had been minimal, as the course continued to be delivered face to face at the main campus for most lessons, but also online or at an alternative venue when face to face teaching at the main site was not possible. Staff did however reflect on the learner's feedback and agreed that going forward they would implement additional measures to develop students' capacity for independent learning at SCQF Level 8.

A complainant was dissatisfied with some of their learning, and investigation highlighted that Canvas required being better organised to ensure the relevance of the materials available. The Curriculum Manager confirmed that a tidy up exercise would take place to improve the learning experience for students. Another complainant was unhappy with their learning experience, feeling that the lecturer was moving too quickly, and it was agreed that for future lessons, the lecturer would ensure that all students understood the lesson before moving on.

C3 Course Related continued

The Learning and Teaching aspects of the remaining complaint in this subcategory were largely not upheld, however an aspect of the complaint which related to assessment feedback raised a concern for the Curriculum Manager, who agreed that students should be better informed about the requirements of Internal Verification, and how this can affect results and the timeliness of assessment feedback.

There were five complaints in the **Environment and Resources** subcategory. One complainant was unhappy with the IT equipment/teaching resources specifically software installation policies. It was explained that the requirement to have all student profiles reset to the generic profile each time they logon is required to ensure College PC Hard Drives do not become too full, and that non-IT staff and students are not permitted to install software to protect all users and maintain good machine health. It was clarified that when specific software is required, the department/lecturer can log a job on the IT service desk, and the IT department can then conduct safe installation for the requester.

Four students raised concerns within the Environment and Resources subcategory due to the deletion of the Adobe suite, which was previously free, but now incurs a cost, therefore has been removed by the College. The complaint was resolved to the satisfaction of the learners when it was agreed to restore the Adobe suite for them until the end of the 2023-24 academic year.

The majority of complaints in the Course Related category, concerned **Course Management**, with 24 complaints reviewed.

One complainant was unhappy with the overall organisation of their evening course during the previous academic year, and whilst the complaint was not upheld due the complainant having been offered alternative solutions to their issues throughout the year, as a gesture of goodwill, they were offered a free of charge place on the course again during 2024-25, to help them achieve the desired qualification.

A learner was unhappy with the placement element of their course, due to lack of ability to undertake their work experience in a school environment. This complaint was not upheld as the opportunity for a placement within a school environment is not something that would be guaranteed, and the offer of a specific school placement was not made during interview. However, it was agreed that future placement planning would include more detailed explanation regarding placement opportunities during induction, and within the induction handbook.

One student expressed dissatisfaction with the organisation of their course, primarily delayed feedback on the outcome of assessments. The complaint was resolved by providing the learner with a timeline for marking and feeding back on outstanding assessments.

A class group was dissatisfied with general poor organisation of their learning; including poor explanation of the requirements for some assessments, poor support from/lack of availability of the lecturer, inconsistent feedback and changes of lecturer for some classes mid-way through teaching. An action plan was put in place to address each point of concern, and a commitment was made to ensuring that the group felt clear about assessment requirements and felt supported going forward.

C3 Course Related continued

One complainant was dissatisfied with many aspects of the management of their programme including lack of preparedness for study at SCQF Level 8, poor progress tracking, lack of resources for formative assessment, lack of resources for terminology, inaccuracies in teaching materials, and inconsistent assessment practices. This complaint was upheld as investigation concluded that there were a number of issues to be addressed, and a plan was developed for going forward which included reviewing and adjusting the course timetable to better prepare students for the Level 8 coursework, introducing tracker passports to monitor student progress, providing additional resources to enhance the quality and style of formative materials used for assessment preparation, making key terminology resources more accessible through Canvas, reviewing and correcting resources as part of pre-verification activities at the start of the new term, and pre-verifying alternative assessments with achievable challenge. It was also confirmed that the future delivery of the course would be monitored closely to ensure the changes introduced were proving effective.

A 2024-25 academic year course applicant was unhappy that they could not be provided with the exact timetable for the course in January 2024. It was explained that timetables change from year to year based on a number of factors, so there were no set days or class timetables available at that early stage. They were advised that more information would become available and shared with applicants later in the year.

A complaint related to the course description on the website, not accurately reflecting the genuine cost of participating on a programme, due to the additional equipment list and requirements. Investigation confirmed that whilst the website does clearly state that the purchase of materials is required for this course, the specific supply list was not informed to course participants in a timely manner. It was agreed that the information provided should have been clearer, and that necessary changes would be made to the website to ensure that this situation does not recur.

There were a considerable number of complaints from leisure class learners who were dissatisfied with the overall management of their courses for reasons including lack of communication on the start date of their programme, lack of communication when attempting to obtain a refund/delayed refunds, a difference between the advertised number of classes and the actual number provided, late joining instructions, late cancellation of courses and poor responsiveness to emails and calls regarding course enquiries. Following investigation of these complaints, it was agreed that unforeseen staff shortages within the Commercial department had led to a delay in the time taken to respond to enquiries, and in each case a response and apology was quickly provided, and an appropriate action put in place to resolve the problem to the satisfaction of the complainant.

There were also a couple of complaints regarding late cancellation of courses from non-leisure class students. In both cases complainants were reminded that in signing their enrolment forms, they agreed to accept that the College were not liable if unable to deliver a course because of causes beyond its reasonable control. It was however agreed that the College website would be updated to reflect recruitment deadlines for all courses.

C3 Course Related continued

There were two complaints relating to **Facilitated Learning and Support**; one from a student who was unhappy with the restriction on extra support being available to them for anxiety, due to their course being delivered online. The complainant was provided with a refund and withdrawn from the course, which was a satisfactory resolution for them. The other complaint was from a student who felt they were not given sufficient information about support for using a laptop in their external exam. This complaint was not upheld, as a review of guidance records demonstrated that the complainant was offered various forms of information, including advice on alternative exam arrangements and information on registering with the extended learning support program. It was however committed that the availability of support for using laptops for exams would be even further emphasised to learners during both Induction and Guidance in the 2024-25 academic year.

There were four complaints in the **Assessment, Exams and Certification** subcategory. Two complaints were from students who did not receive their HND certificate as expected. It was ascertained that in both cases, the issue lay with the institutions with whom the learners had completed their HNC award. In one case, the complainant was able to contact the other College to have the issue remedied, resulting in them being certificated with their HND. In the other case a solution had to be arranged to enable the student to infill into classes to complete the outstanding HNC units, which was a satisfactory resolution for them.

One complainant was unhappy with the College's use of a duplicate Scottish Candidate Number resulting in an issue with their certification. This led to the University of Glasgow being unable to confirm their conditional place. Upon being made aware of this, the College quickly arranged a merge of the student's records and contacted the University to confirm this error and verify the student had achieved the requisite qualification to confirm their place.

The final Course Related complaint was subcategorised within **Others** and came from student who had not received their student card several weeks into their course, therefore disadvantaging them financially. This was quickly resolved with the student card being supplied to the learner the next day.

Category 4 Services

There were 10 complaints in the **Services** category.

A complaint in the **Finance** subcategory came from an applicant who had not received a refund for a course they had cancelled their place on. When this administrative error was discovered, it was quickly resolved, and the applicant refunded.

Category 4 Services continued

There were six complaints related to **Funding/Bursary**. In three cases the funding applicant was reminded of the documentation required to enable their funding application to be processed. In another case the student was reminded of their payment schedule. One complainant was provided with an explanation that their bursary had been reduced on account of their attendance, and in the remaining case (which related to travel expenses), the complainant was reminded that students under 22 are entitled to a free bus pass from the Scottish Government, and as part of National Policy they are expected to use their bus pass as travel to and from College.

A complaint within the Services category fell into the **Library and Learning Technology** subcategory and was from a student who was dissatisfied with the library policy for not sharing a student reference number with an unknown individual, should they forget their student card. It was explained to the student that due to restrictions related to GDPR, as well as ensuring the safety, confidentiality, and security of individuals and the College's systems, library staff were unable to provide the information requested by the complainant.

Two complaints concerning Services were sub categorised within **Others**. One complainant was unhappy with changes to the availability of counselling services for students compared with previous academic years. It was explained that funding cuts have led to a reduction in the number of sessions now available to each learner, but that despite the reduction, Glasgow Clyde College are still providing students who study here with a service that is at the top end of services being offered across the country. Information on how to access counselling sessions out with college was offered, as well as the number for the 'time to talk' helpline that is staffed by trained counsellors five days per week. The other complainant was unhappy with the MFA requirement to authenticate using a phone when not on campus, as they do not own a mobile phone. It was explained to the complainant that the verification method does not need to be a mobile phone but could instead be an alternative email address. The student was offered support from the IT team to facilitate the use of a secondary email address for the verification process.

Category 5 Facilities

There were three complaints in the **Facilities** category.

The complaint in the **Maintenance, Lifts and Car Parking** subcategory was from a student who felt lifts were unsafe for wheelchair users. It was established that '*Priority for Disabled and those with Mobility Impairments*' posters, normally on display, were being refreshed for redeployment, so these were finalised and displayed urgently. A reminder was also sent to staff and students requesting that wheelchair users be given priority access to lifts, and furthermore it was agreed to designate a priority lift for wheelchair users.

Category 5 Facilities continued

The remaining two complaints were subcategorised within **Others**.

One complaint was from a student who was dissatisfied with the condition of an accessible toilet, and in response it was committed to ensuring that the campus cleaning team check and service accessible toilets at least every two hours.

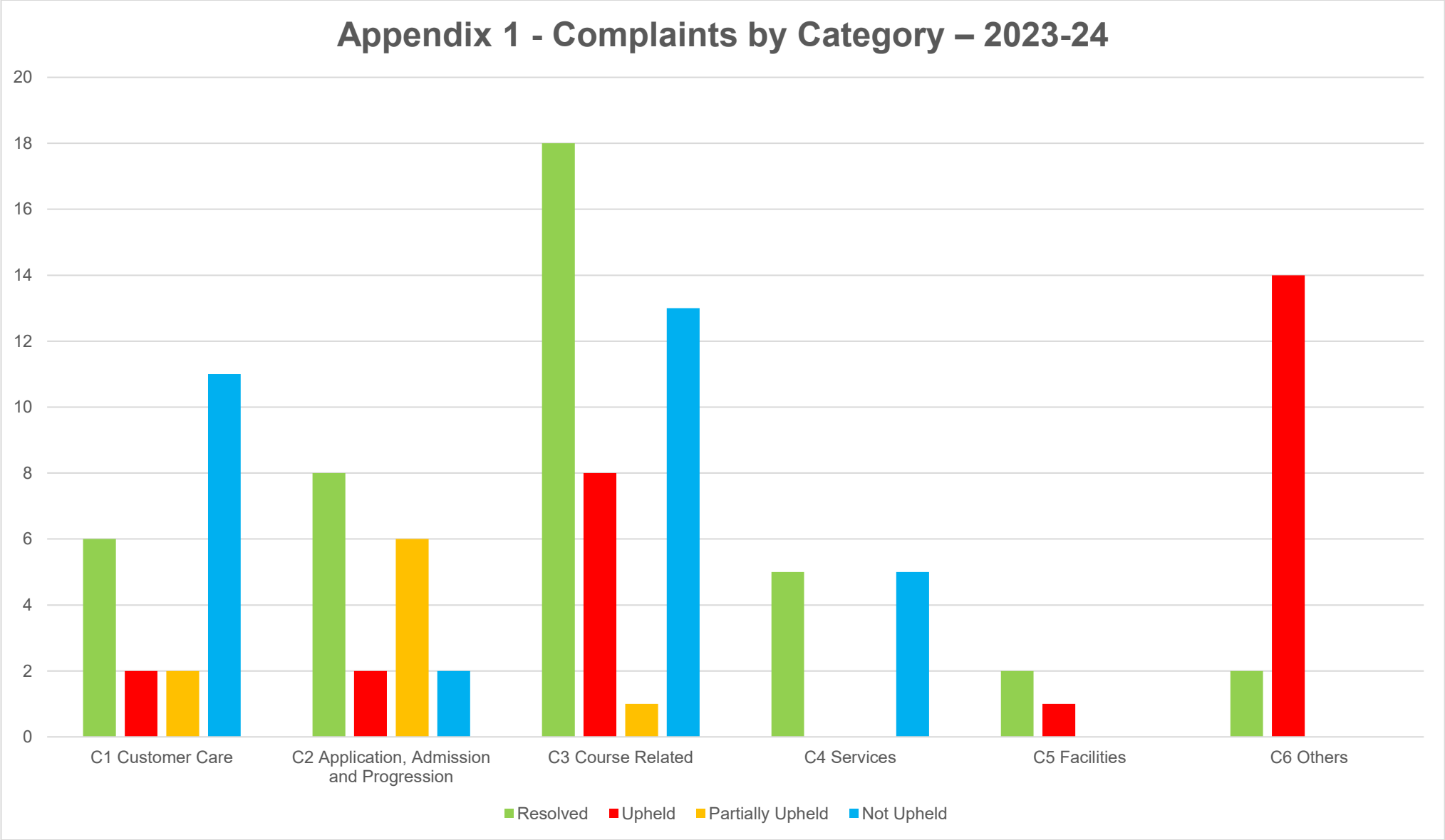
The last complaint in the Facilities category was from a neighbour who was unhappy with damage to a boundary wall between Glasgow Clyde College and their property. The complainant was invited to a meeting to discuss a report commissioned by the College in December 2022 regarding the boundary wall. During the meeting, it was agreed the College would seek advice from legal advisors to understand the respective responsibilities for undertaking the works outlined in the report, and the complainant was reassured that Glasgow Clyde would work with them to reach a settlement in terms of the liability of the College and the residents for the required works.

Category 6 Others

There were eight complaints in the **Others** category, from 2022-23 academic year learners who had been impacted by industrial action/ASOS with results not being processed in-year leading to lack of timely certification for those attempting to gain employment, sit trade tests to receive pay rises, or confirming university places. Actions put in place mainly involved providing employers and HE establishments with confirmation that the students had passed all units, and that certification would be able to proceed on termination of industrial action.

There were a further eight complaints recorded throughout the 2023-24 academic year relating to a further spell of industrial action/ASOS and in all cases, students were advised that industrial action was being taken as the result of a national dispute, therefore Glasgow Clyde College management could do nothing locally to avert the action. However they were reassured that the College would do whatever it could to minimise the impact and deal with any outstanding teaching or assessment issues once the strike was over.

Section 4 – Breakdown of complaints



Appendix 2 - Complaints by Sub-category – 2023-24

