GLASGOW CLYDE COLLEGE

Annual Complaint Handling Report 2025-26

			
People-centred	**Pioneering**	**Principled**	**Passionate**

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Section 1
Introduction and Overview

Glasgow Clyde College handles complaints in accordance with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman's (SPSO's) Model Complaints Handling Procedure. This includes mandatory reporting and publishing of complaints performance statistics, complaints trends, as well as lessons learned, and actions taken to improve services.

In addition to this report (which is published annually on our website) we also report on complaints monthly and quarterly to the Senior Leadership Team.

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of our performance in handling complaints, and provides information on the following Key Performance Indicators:

- the number of complaints we received (during period 1 August 2025 to 31 July 2026)
- at what stage we dealt with complaints (Stage 1, Stage 2 or Escalated);
- the time we took to deal with complaints (against 5 and 20 working day targets); and
- the outcome of complaints (Upheld, Not Upheld, Partially Upheld or Resolved).

In addition, we report on:

- what types of complaints we received during 2025-26 (using the standardised categories developed by the College Development Network's Complaint Handling Advisory Group);
- how we learned from and made improvements as a result of considering the complaints we received during 2025-26; and
- how 2025-26 data compares with previous years.

Section 2
Executive Summary

Complaint Handling Performance during Academic Year 2025-26

The 2025-26 complaints data demonstrates a well-established complaints handling process that successfully brought all 113 complaints to a formal conclusion. Performance was strongest in the effective resolution of Stage 1 complaints and in maintaining consistent investigation outcomes.

The key challenge emerging is the increasing complexity of complaints. Over one-third of cases handled during this academic year required Stage 2 investigation; average Stage 2 response times exceeded 20 working days; and SPSO compliance fell to 70% for formal investigations.

Customer Care, Course Related, and Admissions/Progression complaints accounted for almost all complaint activity and should remain the primary focus of improvement activity.

Overall, data suggests a complaints system that is functioning effectively but facing increasing demand from more complex and multifaceted cases.

Complaint Handling Three Year Trend

Compared to both 2023-24 and 2024-25, Academic Year 2025-26 saw the highest volume of complaints.

Over the three academic years, Stage 2 complaints have become a much larger component of the College's complaints profile. The volume of formal investigations has increased by 43%, average investigation times have risen by 25%, and SPSO compliance has fallen from 75% to 70%.

In addition, rather than being clearly upheld or not upheld, many recent complaints contain multiple elements where some concerns are found to be justified and lead to service improvements while others are not substantiated. This is characteristic of increasingly complex complaint investigations.

While the College continues to conclude all complaints, it is clear that complaint complexity is increasing, and additional focus may be required on early resolution, investigator capacity and the management of complex equality, progression and conduct-related cases.

The increasing average time taken to close complaints and the growing complexity of complaint themes suggest that future performance risks are most likely to arise from timeliness. The key challenge going forward will be maintaining SPSO compliance if complaints continue to grow in volume and complexity.

Section 3
2025-26
Key Performance Indicators

1. The total number of complaints received

Quarter	Complaints
Q1	38
Q2	20
Q3	23
Q4	32
Total	**113**

The College managed 113 complaints during 2025-26, and complaint activity was concentrated in the start of session and end of session/progression period.

2. Number /% complaints at each stage; closed within 5 and 20 working days

The distribution of complaints at each stage during 2025-26 was as follows:

Quarter	Stage 1	Stage 2	Escalated
Q1	65.8%	31.6%	2.6%
Q2	75.0%	20.0%	5.0%
Q3	69.6%	26.1%	4.3%
Q4	53.1%	37.5%	9.4%

SPSO request that Stage 1 complaints are closed within 5 working days, and Stage 2/ Escalated complaints are closed within 20 working days. Compliance levels were as follows:

Stage 1	
Quarter	**Compliance**
Q1	96.0%
Q2	93.3%
Q3	75.0%
Q4	52.9%

Stage 2/Escalated	
Quarter	**Compliance**
Q1	83.3%
Q2	100%
Q3	100%
Q4	33.3%

Performance across all stages:

Quarter	Compliance
Q1	92.1%
Q2	90.0%
Q3	82.6%
Q4	46.9%
All Year	**77.0%**

Overall compliance with SPSO standard timescales across all stages was 77.0%; with 80.8% of Stage 1 complaints closed within five working days and 70.0% of Stage 2/Escalated complaints closed within 20 working days.

Three out of the four quarters showed fairly strong complaint handling performance. Quarter 4 is the clear outlier and significantly impacted annual performance.

3. Average time in working days for a full response at each stage

The average time taken to close Stage 1 complaints during 2025-26 was 3.9 working days, which was within the SPSO target of 5 working days.

However the average time taken to close Stage2/ Escalated complaints was 20.9 working days, which is above the SPSO target of 20 working days.

Measure	Result	Average Days
Stage 1 within 5 days	59 of 73 complaints	**3.9 days**
Stage 2/Escalated within 20 days	28 of 40 complaints	**20.9 days**

4. The outcome of complaints at each stage

In responding to complaints, our goal is always to resolve the complaint to the satisfaction of both the complainant and the College. Where this is not possible, a decision must be taken on whether the complaint is Upheld, Partially Upheld or Not Upheld.

The following outcomes were observed:

Stage 1 Outcomes

Outcome	Number	%
Resolved	31	42.5%
Upheld	24	32.9%
Partially Upheld	3	4.1%
Not Upheld	15	20.5%

Stage 2 Outcomes

Outcome	Number	%
Resolved	7	20.6%
Upheld	2	5.9%
Partially Upheld	14	41.2%
Not Upheld	11	32.3%

Escalated Complaint Outcomes

Outcome	Number	%
Resolved	0	0.0%
Upheld	2	33.3%
Partially Upheld	1	16.7%
Not Upheld	3	50.0%

All Stages

Outcome	Number	%
Resolved	38	33.6%
Upheld	28	24.8%
Partially Upheld	18	15.9%
Not Upheld	29	25.7%

- Resolved complaints represented the largest single outcome overall at 33.6%.
- At Stage 1, over two-fifths of complaints 42.5% were resolved straightforwardly to the satisfaction of the complainant.
- At Stage 2, the most common outcome was Partially Upheld at 41.2%, suggesting investigations often identified validity in complaints while not supporting all aspects raised.
- Escalated complaints were relatively rare, with half ultimately being Not Upheld.

Section 4 – Learning and Actions Taken as a result of 2025-26 Complaints

Summary of complaints received in each category during 2025-26

Category	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Customer Care	21	12	10	9	**52**
Applications, Admission and Progression	4	3	3	12	**22**
Course Related	13	2	10	10	**35**
Services	0	0	0	0	**0**
Facilities	0	3	0	1	**4**
Others	0	0	0	0	**0**

Staff Conduct and Customer Care

This was the most significant theme throughout the year. Complaints related to communication style, professionalism, behaviour towards students, inclusivity, handling of support needs, and interactions during investigations. These complaints arose across multiple curriculum and support areas.

Lessons Learned

- Student concerns can be escalated by communication style even where decisions are appropriate.
- Greater consistency is required in staff understanding of inclusive practice and student support.
- Staff require ongoing development in professional communication, equality, accessibility and trauma-informed approaches.

Actions Taken

- Staff reminded of expected standards of professional communication.
- Apologies provided where tone or approach was inappropriate.
- Professional standards and customer service training implemented.
- Enhanced guidance for supporting autistic and neurodiverse learners.
- Increased focus on inclusive practice and equality obligations.
- Greater involvement of Learning Inclusion teams in student support processes.
- Implementation of safeguarding measures where required.

Course Management and Learning & Teaching

A number of complaints related to programme delivery, curriculum organisation, course resources, assessment arrangements and communication regarding programme expectations.

Lessons Learned

- Students require clearer expectations regarding course delivery and assessment.
- Timely feedback and communication have a significant impact on student satisfaction.
- Business continuity arrangements during staffing changes require strengthening.

Actions Taken

- Development and publication of clearer schemes of work.
- Improved use of Canvas for communication and learning resources.
- Review of assessment guidance and deadlines.
- Formal lecturer handover processes introduced.
- Improved arrangements for lecturer cover during absence.
- Additional learning support and one-to-one student assistance.
- Enhanced monitoring of assessment feedback and marking timescales.

Applications, Admissions and Progression

Complaints related to admissions decisions, progression criteria, entry requirements, waiting lists and communication regarding courses or progression opportunities.

Lessons Learned

- Applicants need clearer information about entry requirements and progression expectations at an earlier stage.
- Accurate and up-to-date website information is critical.
- Additional support during admissions is beneficial for applicants with declared support needs.

Actions Taken

- Clarification of admissions and progression criteria.
- Entry requirements reviewed and clarified.
- Website content updated to ensure accurate course information.
- Additional applicant guidance provided.
- Alternative study routes identified for unsuccessful applicants.
- Improved communication between curriculum departments and applicants.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Complaints highlighted issues with accessibility, neurodivergence support, interview adjustments, pronoun usage, disability support and reasonable adjustments.

Lessons Learned

- Proactive engagement regarding support requirements improves outcomes.
- Inclusive communication and accessibility considerations must be embedded consistently.
- Early intervention reduces escalation of concerns.

Actions Taken

- Review of reasonable adjustments and additional support arrangements put in place
- Improved communication with applicants requiring support.
- Enhanced involvement of Learning Inclusion services
- Training for recruitment panels.
- Staff reminded of appropriate use of names and pronouns.

Facilities, Health & Safety and Estates

Complaints centred on car parking, icy conditions, heating failures, contractor behaviour and campus facilities.

Lessons Learned

- Small environmental issues can significantly affect student experience.
- Preventative maintenance and communication are essential.
- Community and student behaviour issues require ongoing partnership working.

Actions Taken

- Heating systems reviewed and rectified.
- Additional gritting and winter maintenance arrangements.
- Contractor conduct addressed.
- Work undertaken with local authorities regarding parking issues.
- Consideration of vehicle registration systems.
- Improvements to signage and estate procedures.

Section 5
Comparative Analysis
2025-26 vs 2024-25 and 2023-24

There are several notable trends when comparing 2025-26 against the previous two academic years.

Overall Complaint Volumes

Quarter	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
Q1	30	27	38
Q2	24	9	20
Q3	35	29	23
Q4	19	19	32
Total	**108**	**84**	**113**

- Demand on the complaints process has increased. 2025-26 recorded 113 complaints; the highest total across the three-year period and 35% higher than 2024-25.
- In 2025-26, Q1 complaint volumes were significantly higher than previous years at the start of the academic year.
- Q3 was the only quarter where complaints fell below both previous years.
- Q4 recorded a substantial increase compared with both prior years.
- The College appears to be experiencing pressure at key points in the learner journey - admission and enrolment (Q1) and progression and completion (Q4).

Stage 2 Investigations

Quarter	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
Q1	10.0%	7.4%	31.6%
Q2	16.7%	33.3%	20.0%
Q3	31.4%	38.0%	26.1%
Q4	26.3%	15.8%	37.5%

The most significant difference across the three years is in Q1 where Stage 2 investigations increased from 10% (2023-24) and 7.4% (2024-25) to 31.6% in 2025-26. Q4 also showed the highest Stage 2 rate of all three years, suggesting:

- Complaints are becoming more complex.
- More complaints concern issues that cannot be resolved through frontline intervention.
- Staff may require additional support to maximise early resolution.

SPSO Timescale Compliance

Stage 1 Compliance (5-Day Target)

Quarter	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
Q1	100.0%	84.0%	96.0%
Q2	84.2%	80.0%	93.3%
Q3	66.7%	92.3%	75.0%
Q4	92.9%	80.0%	52.9%

Performance in Q1-Q3 broadly compares favourably with previous years. However Q4 shows a marked decline with less than 53% compliance and the lowest Stage 1 performance in the three-year comparison.

Stage 2 Compliance (20-Day Target)

Quarter	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
Q1	66.7%	100.0%	83.3%
Q2	75.0%	66.7%	100.0%
Q3	81.8%	72.7%	100.0%
Q4	20.0%	33.3%	33.3%

2025-26 achieved the strongest Stage 2 performance during Q2 and Q3. However Q4 performance collapsed, two-thirds of Stage 2 investigations breached SPSO timescales, and five investigations exceeded even the extended 40-day limit.

Complaint Outcomes

Resolution is always the preferred outcome, and the rates of resolution were as follows:

Year	% Resolved
2023-24	38.0%
2024-25	40.5%
2025-26	33.6%

Resolved complaints were the largest outcome category in every year. The proportion peaked in 2024-25 but there was a notable reduction in 2025-26, suggesting more complaints required a formal judgement rather than informal resolution.

Upheld Complaints

Year	% Upheld
2023-24	25.0%
2024-25	22.6%
2025-26	24.8%

Upheld rates have remained consistent with approximately one quarter of complaints each year being fully upheld. This indicates a stable level of service failure being identified through the complaints process.

Partially Upheld Complaints

Year	% Partially Upheld
2023-24	8.3%
2024-25	7.1%
2025-26	15.9%

2025-26 saw double the proportion of partially upheld complaints compared with previous years, which suggests complaints are becoming more nuanced and complex. Many 2025-26 complaints identified aspects that were valid alongside aspects that were not upheld.

Not Upheld Complaints

Year	% Not Upheld
2023-24	28.7%
2024-25	29.8%
2025-26	25.7%

Not upheld complaints account for approximately one quarter to one third of all complaints each year. This proportion reduced slightly in 2025-26, which corresponds with the increase in partially upheld outcomes, where investigations often found some validity to concerns rather than rejecting them entirely.

The increase in upheld and partially upheld complaints suggests:

- Better quality investigations identifying service failures.
- More legitimate complaints being received.
- Areas of operational inconsistency emerging during peak periods.

Themes compared with previous years

Customer Care

Customer Care remains the single largest category, specifically:
- Staff Conduct.
- Communication.
- Equality and Diversity.
- Student Support.

Unlike previous years, there is increasing emphasis on:
- Appropriate communication and language.
- Inclusive practice.
- Neurodiversity.
- ELSA implementation.

Admissions and Progression

This has emerged as a significant issue during 2025-26. Examples include:
- Entry requirement confusion.
- Course suitability.
- Progression decisions.
- Admission processes.

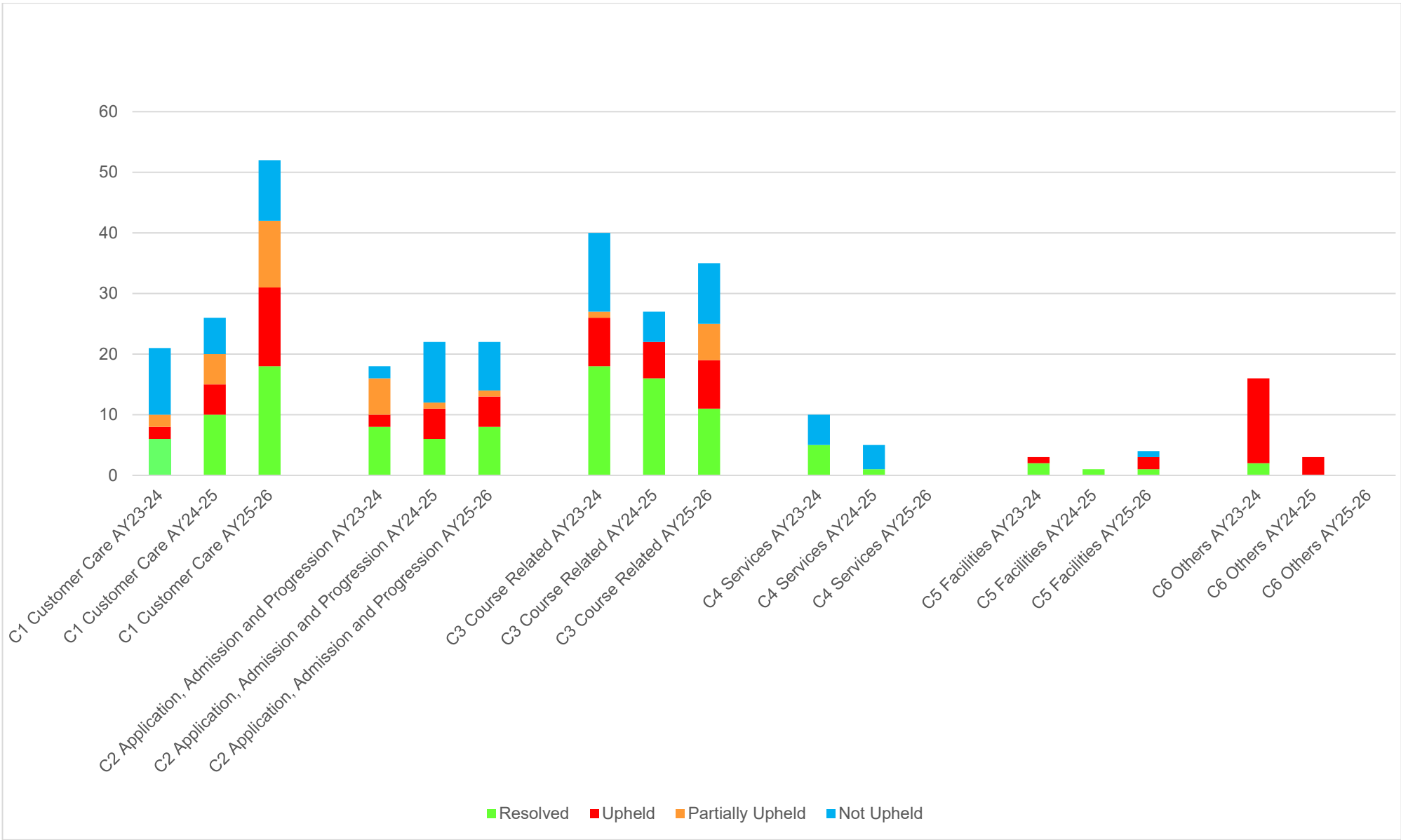
The sharp increase in 2025-26 Q4 was not observed in the previous two years.

Course Management

Complaints increasingly centre on:

- Continuity of learning during lecturer absence.
- Assessment processes.
- Feedback quality.

Complaint Category Trends 2023-34 to 2025-26



Section 6
Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO)

Role of SPSO

Where a complainant is dissatisfied with our response or how we handled their complaint, they can escalate to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) for consideration.

The SPSO carry out a preliminary investigation to check if a complaint referred to them is one they will consider further. Decisions they can take include:

- acting to fix the problem
- returning the complaint to an organisation for further work/action
- signposting the complainant to another organisation
- closing the complaint if:
  - an organisation has already taken or offered appropriate action
  - they cannot do anything more/the desired outcome is not achievable
- moving the complaint to the next stage of their process.

SPSO Decision and Recommendation

During 2025-26, Glasgow Clyde was made aware of one complaint referred to SPSO.

SPSO's decision was that the complaint was not one they would consider further because response the complainant received was reasonable, as:

- we provided a clear response to the issues raised
- we explained why we took a different position to that of the complainant
- where we recognised our communication could be clearer, we took appropriate action.

The decision letter did however note that, as the complaint had been raised by a parent, the College should have contacted the child to seek their views as part of the investigation, in line with the SPSO Child Friendly Complaints Handling Principles.

Glasgow Clyde College had contacted the child regarding the complaint, and the child requested that their parent act on their behalf throughout the complaints process. The College considered this approach to be in the child's best interests and consistent with the SPSO's Child Friendly Complaints Handling Principles.

While the child's views had been sought, they were not copied into the final response issued to their parent. This was identified as a learning point for the College. As a result of the recommendation, all relevant staff were reminded of the Child Friendly Complaints Handling Principles and provided with a copy of the SPSO's Child Friendly Complaints Handling Process Guidance.