

Complaints Handling Quarterly Report

Academic Year 2025/26

Quarter 01: 01 August 2025 – 31 October 2025

Quarter 02: 01 November 2025 – 31 January 2026

1. Introduction

The University has a robust Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP) in place that mirrors the Scottish Public Sector Ombudsman (SPSO) Model CHP. We value feedback received from students and other stakeholders, and as part of our continuous improvement culture, seek to learn from the feedback received to improve our processes, where appropriate and enhance the student experience.

2. Background

The University manages complaints in line with its published Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP). As outlined in the CHP, key complaints data must be reported on both a quarterly and annual basis. Accordingly, quarterly and annual complaints reports are submitted to the UWS Vice-Chancellor's Executive (VCE) prior to publication. All statistics are presented in accordance with the four standard indicators defined by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO), which oversees complaint handling standards across the higher education sector and may review complaint outcomes once the University's internal processes have been completed.

Complaints are managed through the SPSO's two-stage model:

- Stage 1 – Frontline Resolution, with a target response time of up to 5 working days; and/or
- Stage 2 – Investigation, with a target response time of up to 20 working days, acknowledging that more complex cases may require additional time.

At either stage, complaints may also be resolved early where both the complainant and the University agree an appropriate course of action without the need to complete the full procedure or determine whether the complaint is upheld.

3. Reporting Period and Key Observations

This report covers Quarter 1 and 2 of Academic Year 2025/26 (01 August 2025 – 31 October 2025; and 01 November 2025 – 31 January 2026).

Complaint volumes continue to track closely year on year for this reporting period, with 58 complaints in the first two quarters of 2025/26 compared with 60 in the previous year.

The majority of cases (46) were handled at Stage 1, with 12 progressing directly to Stage 2. A further 13 complaints were escalated from Stage 1 to Stage 2, following complainants receiving their Stage 1 response.

In Academic Year 2025/26, the Appeals, Complaints and Conduct (ACC) Team introduced clearer complaint categories to support more accurate reporting and analysis. The categories with the highest volume of complaints received were Assessment, Examinations and Certification; Finance (Fees); Student Support; and Staff Conduct.

Across Quarters 01 and 02, the category of Assessment, Exams and Certification was the most common complaint category, with twenty-one complaints received. Of these, six were upheld. Apologies were issued to students and corrective action was taken by Schools to resolve the issues. This included the remarking of submissions, application of ECS, and where appropriate, permitting students a further assessment attempt.

During Quarter 02, four complaints were received in relation to staff conduct. The outcomes of these complaints were three, not upheld and one considered resolved. Outcome communications were clear and transparent, providing complainants with a detailed explanation of the reasons for the decisions reached.

Where appropriate, the University implements appropriate corrective actions and identifies root causes to prevent recurrence. In relation to complaints concerning student support, responses included signposting to the wide range of support services available within the University to ensure students were aware of how to access help at an early stage.

As part of the University's commitment to continuous improvement, the University uses complaint feedback to address issues, strengthen our processes and enhance the overall student experience.

Paisley Campus accounted for the largest number of complaints across both quarters, with Quarter one also including complaints from students in international partner institutions.

Performance against SPSO timescales has remained challenging, reflecting a difficult operating environment within ACC. High caseload volumes across all areas, combined with resource constraints (notably ACC was operating at 33% staffing capacity for the first six weeks of Quarter 01), impacted the team's ability to consistently meet expected timescales. In Quarter one, no Stage 1 or 2 complaints were closed within the five and twenty-day targets. However, following the introduction of additional resource within ACC, Quarter two showed measurable improvement, with six Stage 1, two Stage 2, and six escalated complaints concluded within the required timeframes. Further development work is ongoing to embed these improvements, to strengthen performance against timescale requirements.

Overall, the findings from Quarters 01 and 02 indicate that, while challenges remain, there is clear evidence of improvement. Complaint volumes remain stable year on year, processes for categorisation and analysis have been strengthened, and learning from complaints continues to inform service improvement. As noted, with further development work underway, including upcoming training at the University Quality Network, it is expected that these improvements will strengthen performance as the year progresses.

4. SPSO Key Performance Indicators

Indicator One: Total number of complaints			
Total Number of Complaints Received	Quarter 01	Quarter 02	Total
Number of complaints at both Stage 1 and Stage 2	23	35	58
Breakdown of complaints investigated by Stage			
Stage 1	17	29	46
Stage 2	6	6	12
Stage 1 complaints escalated to Stage 2	2	11	13

Indicator Two: Percentage of complaints at each stage closed in full within the set timescales of five and twenty working days				
	Quarter 01		Quarter 02	
		%		%
Number of complaints closed in full at Stage 1 within five working days as a % of all Stage 1 complaints responded to in full	0	-	6	21
The number of complaints closed in full at Stage 2 within 20 working days as % of all Stage 2 complaints responded to in full	0	-	2	33
The number of complaints closed in full after escalation within 20 working days as % of all complaints responded to in full after escalation	0	-	6	55

Indicator Three: Average time in working days for a full response to complaints at each stage		
	Quarter 01	Quarter 02
Average time in working days to respond to complaints at Stage 1	23	13
Average time in working days to respond to complaints at Stage 2	88	38
Average time in working days to respond to complaints after escalation	-	6

Indicator Four: Complaint Outcomes Quarter 01											
	Upheld		Partially Upheld		Not Upheld		Resolved ¹		Outstanding (open)		Total
		%		%		%		%		%	
Number of complaints as a % of all complaints closed at Stage 1	7	41	2	12	5	29	3	18	0	-	17
Number of complaints as a % of all complaints considered at Stage 2 only	1	17	1	17	3	50	1	17	0	-	6
Number of complaints as a % of all complaints closed at Stage 2 – escalated from Stage 1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	100	2

Indicator Four: Complaint Outcomes Quarter 02											
	Upheld		Partially Upheld		Not Upheld		Resolved ¹		Outstanding (open)		Total
		%		%		%		%		%	
Number of complaints as a % of all complaints closed at Stage 1	8	29	0	-	14	50	6	21	0	-	28 ²
Number of complaints as a % of all complaints considered at Stage 2	2	33	0	-	3	50	1	17	0	-	6
Number of complaints as a % of all complaints closed at Stage 2 - escalated from Stage 1	0	-	0	-	1	9	0	-	10	91	11

¹ A complaint is resolved when both the University and the complainant agree what action (if any) will be taken to provide full and final resolution for the complainant, without making a decision on whether the complaint is upheld or not upheld.

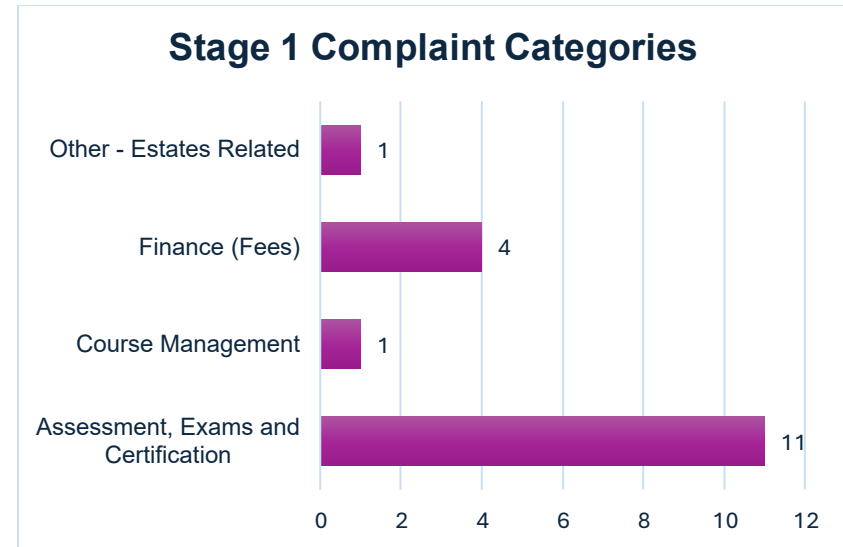
² One complaint did not receive a response within the maximum ten-day timeframe and was escalated to Stage 2, in line with the CHP and in agreement with the complainant.

5. Complaints Received by Category

5.1. Quarter 01

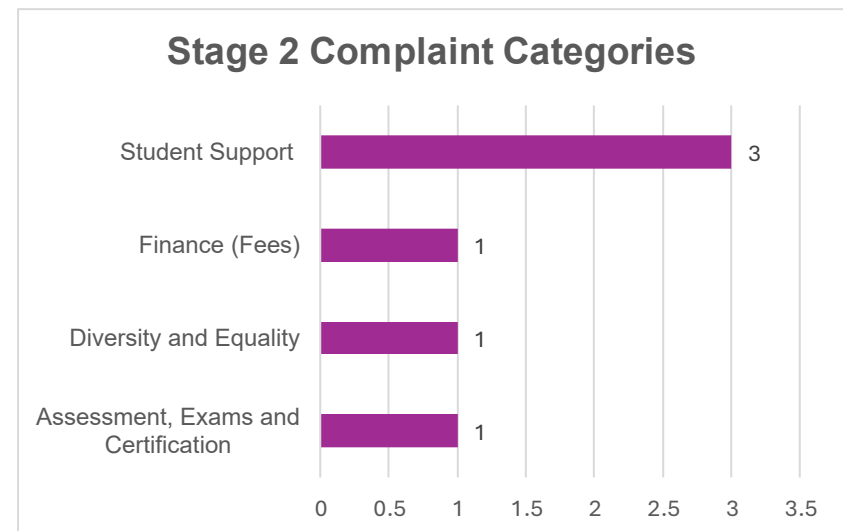
Stage 1 Complaint Categories

Assessment, Exams and Certification	11
Course Management	1
Finance (Fees)	4
Other – Estates Related	1
TOTAL	17



Stage 2 Complaint Categories

Assessment, Exams and Certification	1
Diversity and Equality	1
Finance (Fees)	1
Student Support	3
TOTAL	6



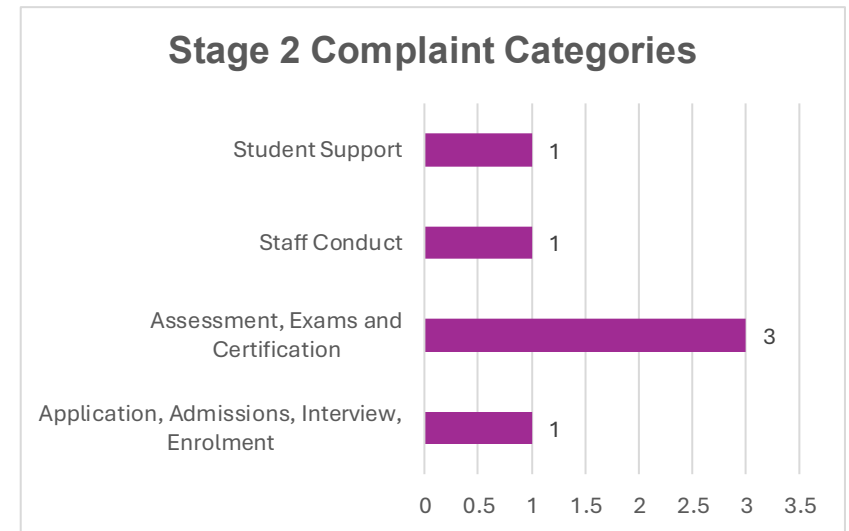
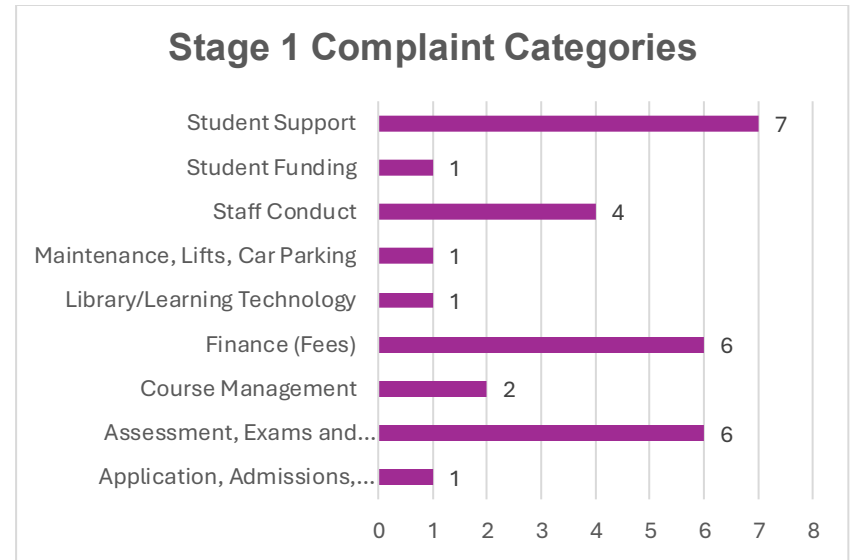
5.2. Quarter 02

Stage 1 Complaint Categories

Application, Admissions, Interview, Enrolment	1
Assessment, Exams and Certification	6
Course Management	2
Finance (Fees)	6
Library/Learning Technology	1
Maintenance, Lifts, Car Parking	1
Staff Conduct	4
Student Funding	1
Student Support	7
TOTAL	29

Stage 2 Complaint Categories

Application, Admissions, Interview, Enrolment	1
Assessment, Exams and Certification	3
Staff Conduct	1
Student Support	1
TOTAL	6



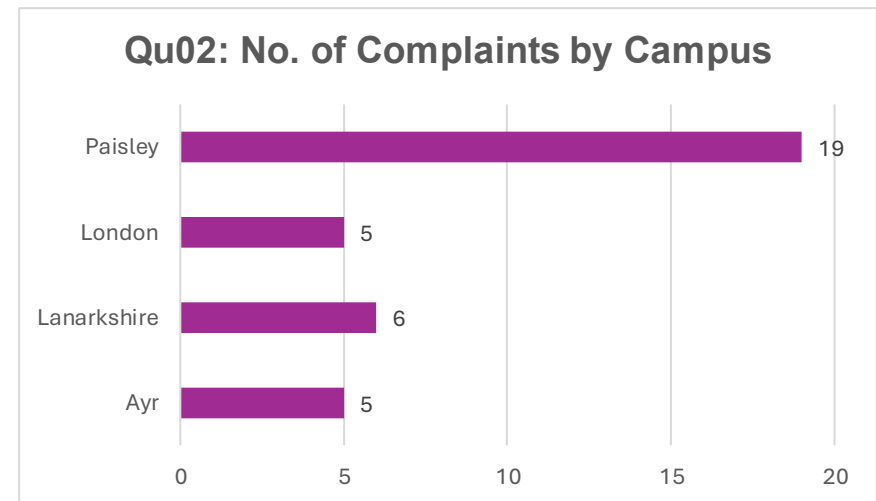
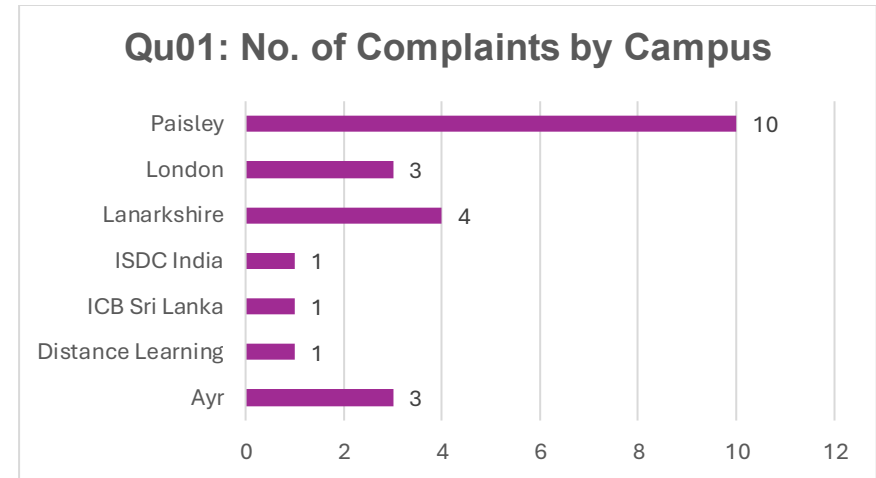
6. Complaints Received by Campus

6.1. Quarter 01

Campus	No. of Complaints
Ayr	3
Distance Learning	1
ICB Sri Lanka	1
ISDC India	1
Lanarkshire	4
London	3
Paisley	10
TOTAL	23

6.2. Quarter 02

Campus	No. of Complaints
Ayr	5
Lanarkshire	6
London	5
Paisley	19
TOTAL	35



7. Complaint Outcomes

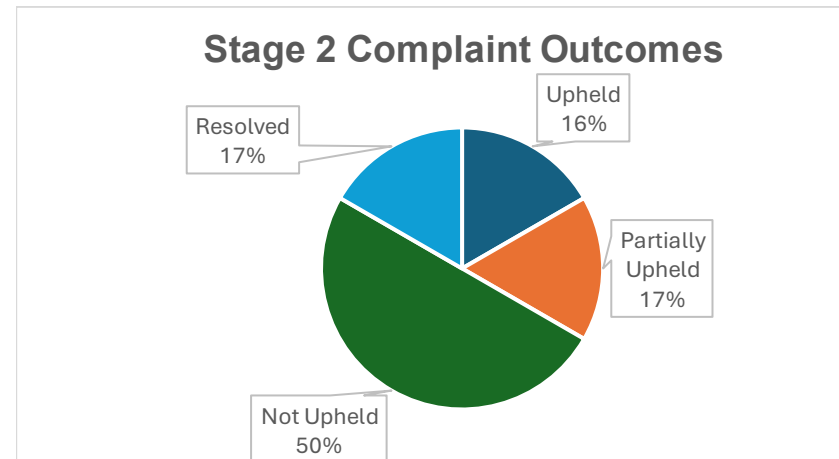
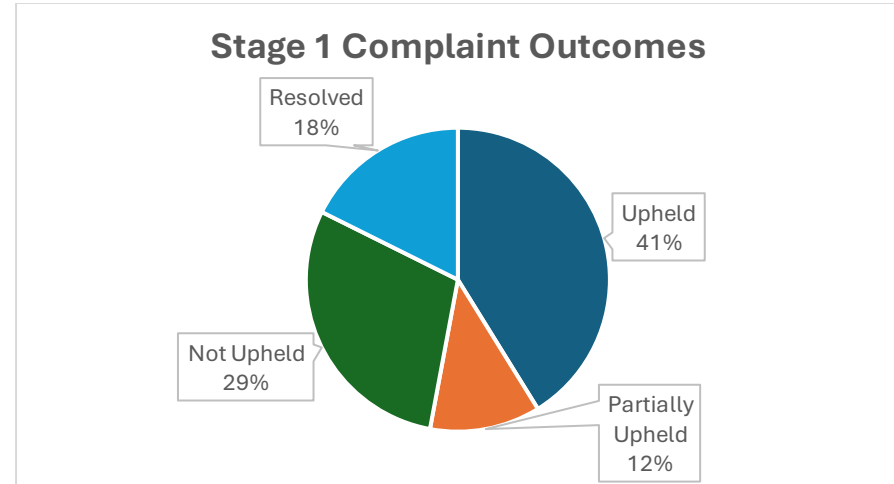
7.1. Quarter 01

Stage 1 Complaint Outcomes

Upheld	7
Partially Upheld	2
Not Upheld	5
Resolved	3
TOTAL	17

Stage 2 Complaint Outcomes

Upheld	1
Partially Upheld	1
Not Upheld	3
Resolved	1
TOTAL	6



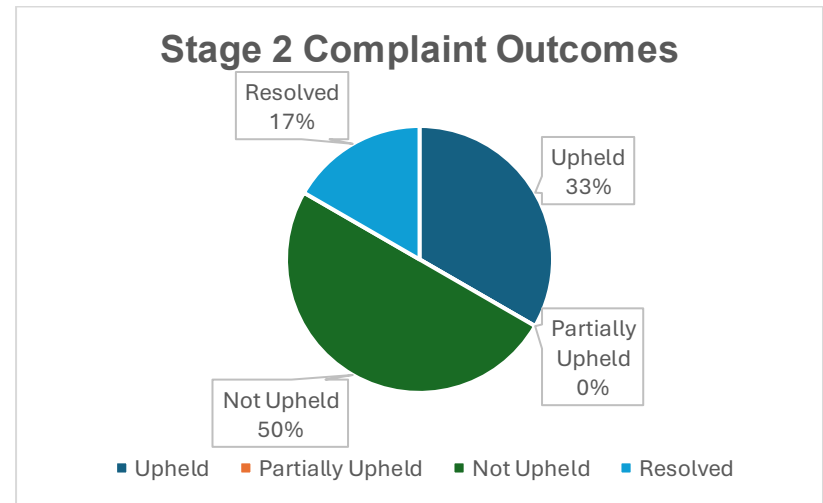
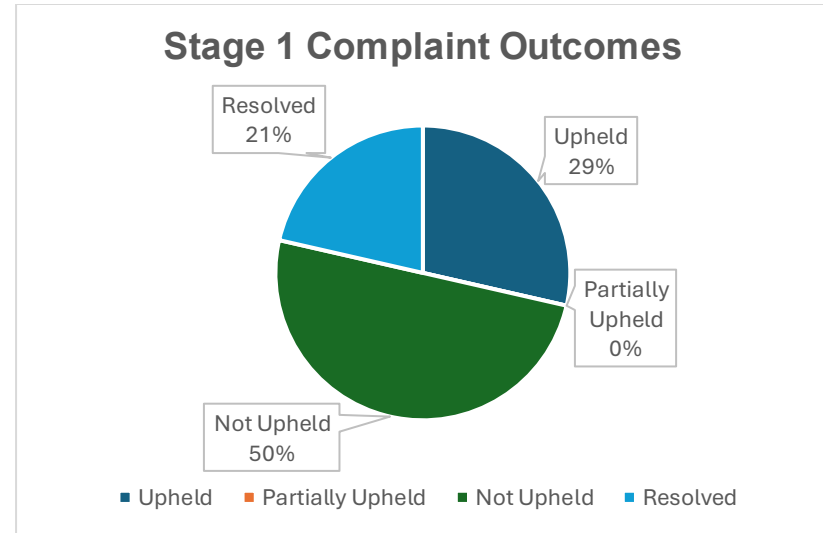
7.2. Quarter 02

Stage 1 Complaint Outcomes

Upheld	8
Partially Upheld	0
Not Upheld	14
Resolved	6
TOTAL	28

Stage 2 Complaint Outcomes

Upheld	2
Partially Upheld	0
Not Upheld	3
Resolved	1
TOTAL	6



8. Learning from Complaints

Concern	Action Points/Lessons Learned
Prolonged delays in receiving outcome of academic appeal.	Apology issued for delay – Active recruitment exercise within the Appeals, Complaints and Conduct Team completed building capacity within the team and to ensure outcomes are communicated promptly.
Fee invoices sent to employer in error.	Apology issued - Staff training identified to avoid a reoccurrence.
Lack of academic guidance and communication during a period of suspension.	Apology issued - Documentation and guidance associated with suspensions reviewed and enhanced for clarity.
Lack of support in relation to the Student Academic Integrity process.	Apology issued – Awareness raising amongst staff in relation to signposting the support available to students involved in the process.
Student unable to attend Graduation Ceremony – withdrawn with award.	Apology issued for the upset caused - While the correct process was followed, communication regarding eligibility for Graduation attendance will be improved in student guidance.

9. Referrals to the Scottish Public Sector Ombudsman

During this reporting period, the University received one request for information from the SPSO regarding a case involving a delay in a student receiving their dissertation mark. After reviewing the information provided, the SPSO concluded that the University had clearly demonstrated that appropriate marking and moderation procedures were followed, and that reasonable steps had been taken to address the student's concerns.

Donald Higgins – Durnan
Appeals, Complaints and Conduct Manager
 April 2025