



**Dumfries and  
Galloway College**

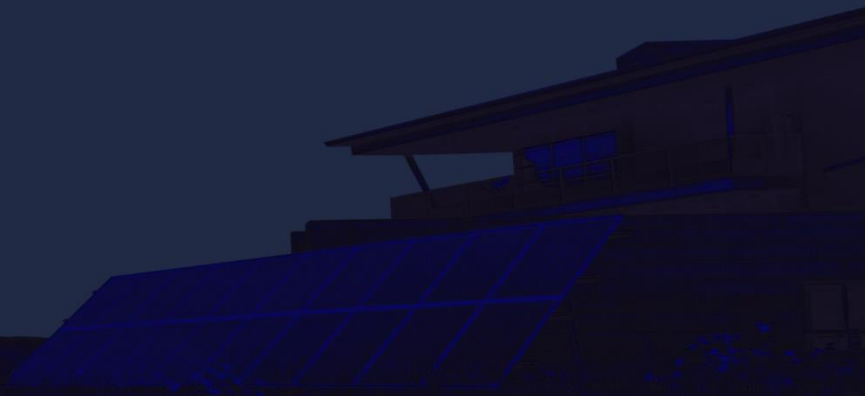
One step ahead

# **ANNUAL COMPLAINTS HANDLING REPORT, ACADEMIC YEAR 22-23**

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Performance Team

October 2023



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# Annual Complaints Handling Report Academic Year 2022-2023

## *1. The Purpose of the Report*

The purpose of the report is to provide an overview of our performance in handling complaints effectively, resolving complaints in a timely manner and identifying opportunities for improvement when our service falls short of expectations.

## 2. Background to the Report

The College is required to comply with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman's (SPSO) Model Complaints Handling Procedure and report annually on our performance in handling complaints. It is also part of our duties under Freedom of Information legislation.

This analysis includes statistics in relation to the volume and type of complaints, as well as key performance details.

### Complaint reporting

- **Quarterly Reports:** Prepared by the Performance Team for the purpose of review by Senior Management. Reports are published on the College Website.
- **Annual Report:** Prepared by the Performance Team for the purpose of review by Senior Management, Executive Leadership Team and approved by the College Board of Management. Report is published on the College Website.

### Complaints received by Category and Complaint Outcomes

The College has adopted the standardised Complaint Categories developed by the College Development Network's Complaint Handling Advisory Group:

- Customer Care
- Applications, Admission and Progression
- Course Related
- Services
- Facilities
- Others

There are four outcome categories to be reported against for Indicator 4 (The outcome of complaints at each stage):

- Upheld (where the College is at fault)
- Not upheld (where the College is not at fault)
- Partially upheld (where some of the points of complaints are upheld and others are not)

- Resolved - A complaint is resolved when both (the organisation) and the customer agree what action (if any) will be taken to provide full and final resolution for the customer, without making a decision about whether the complaint is upheld or not upheld

### 3. The Report

This report covers the period August 2022 to July 2023. In this period there were 22 frontline complaints (Stage 1\*) and 29 complaints requiring a full investigation (Stage 2\*\*). 1 complaint was escalated to Stage 2.

\* complaints that are straightforward, requiring little or no investigation

\*\* complaints that are complex, serious or 'high risk and where the customer is not satisfied with the frontline response

#### 2022-2023 Performance Indicators 1 – 4

##### *Indicator One: The total number of complaints received*

1	Quantitative Indicator	2022-23	2021-22
1.1	Number of complaints received	51	30
1.2	Number of complaints received per 100 population as a %	0.99%	0.54%

Breakdown of Complaints	2022-23	2021-22
Stage 1 Number of complaints received	22	17
Stage 2 Number of complaints received	29	13
Stage 1 Number of complaints escalated to Stage 2	1	1

Breakdown of Complaint Categories	2022-23	2021-22
<b>Stage 1</b>		
Customer Care	2	3
Applications, Admission, Progression	4	3
Course Related	7	6
Services	4	5
Facilities	5	0
<b>Stage 2</b>		
Customer Care	12	8
Applications, Admission, Interview, Enrolment	8	1
Course related	7	4

Services	1	0
Facilities	1	0
<b>Escalated Complaints</b>		
Applications, Admission, Interview, Enrolment	1	0
Course related	0	1

<b>Breakdown of Complaints per Quarter</b>	<b>2022-23</b>	<b>2021-22</b>
<b>Stage 1</b>		
Quarter 1 (August – October)	8	5
Quarter 2 (November – January)	7	3
Quarter 3 (February – April)	2	7
Quarter 4 (May – July)	5	2
Stage 1 Total Number of complaints received	22	17
<b>Stage 2</b>		
Quarter 1 (August – October)	12	1
Quarter 2 (November – January)	6	0
Quarter 3 (February – April)	7	3
Quarter 4 (May – July)	4	9
Stage 2 Number of complaints received	29	13
<b>Stage 1 Number of complaints escalated to Stage 2</b>		
Quarter 1 (August – October)	1	0
Quarter 2 (November – January)	0	0
Quarter 3 (February – April)	0	0
Quarter 4 (May – July)	0	1

*Indicator Two: The number and percentage of complaints at each stage which were closed in full within the set timescales of five and 20 working days*

2	<b>Quantitative Indicator</b>	<b>22-23</b>		<b>21-22</b>	
		No.	%	No.	%
2.1	Number of complaints closed in full at stage 1 within five working days as % of all stage 1 complaints responded to in full	15	68%	12	71%
2.2	The number of complaints closed in full at stage 2 within 20 working days as % of all stage 2 complaints responded to in full	17	59%	6	43%
2.3	The number of complaints closed in full after escalation within 20 working days as % of all complaints responded to in full after escalation.	1	100%	0	0%

*Indicator Three: The average time in working days for a full response to complaints at each stage*

Quantitative Indicator		Average time in working days 2022-2023	Average time in working days 2021-2022
3.1	Average time in working days to respond to complaints at stage 1	3.81	3.52
3.2	Average time in working days to respond to complaints at stage 2	18.83	29.38
3.3	Average time in working days to respond to complaints after escalation	9	29

*Indicator Four: The outcome of complaints at each stage*

	Quantitative Indicator	Upheld		Partially upheld		Not upheld		Resolved***	
		22-23	21-22	22-23	21-22	22-23	21-22	22-23	21-22
4.1	Number of complaints as a % of all complaints closed at stage 1 <i>1 complaint escalated to Stage 2 in both sessions</i>	10 (48%)	8 (50%)	2 (10%)	1 (6%)	3 (14%)	2 (13%)	6 (29%)	5 (31%)
4.2	Number of complaints as a % of all complaints closed at stage 2 *	10 (34%)	7 (54%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)	7 (24%)	2 (15%)	11 (38%)	4 (31%)
4.3	Number of complaints as a % of all complaints closed after escalation	1 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

\*\*\*A complaint is resolved when both (the organisation) and the customer agree what action (if any) will be taken to provide full and final resolution for the customer, without making a decision about whether the complaint is upheld or not upheld

*Customer satisfaction with complaints process*

To ensure compliance with the College Complaints Handling Procedure we requested feedback from complainants regarding their satisfaction with the service they received, and not the circumstances or outcome of their actual

complaint. They were asked to evaluate the service considering the following points:

- Whether the complaints process was easy to access
- Whether they received a prompt acknowledgement of their complaint
- Whether they were dealt with courteously at all times
- Whether their complaint was thoroughly investigated
- Whether they received a fair and clear response and within an appropriate timescale

During session 21-22 satisfaction emails were issued by the Performance Team to complainants. 30% of complainants provided a response.

For Session 22-23 a survey (via Microsoft Forms platform) was devised. This allowed the team to easily produce quantitative data for several outcomes. It was anticipated that complainants would find this approach to providing feedback much easier and be encouraged to respond. For session 22-23 only 14 complainants (28%) provided feedback on their satisfaction of the service provided. It was unfortunate that the rate of response for 22-23 was low, with respondents focusing on the outcome of their complaint rather than the process itself. We will continue to monitor the feedback on a regular basis and identify areas where this can be improved.

Despite there being no increase in the number of responses provided, we can reflect on the responses for the outcomes as indicated in the table below:

Complaint Handling Point	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I found the complaints process easy to access	5 (35.7%)	7 (50%)	2 (14.3%)	0 (0%)
I received a prompt acknowledgement of my complaint	3 (21.4%)	9 (64.3%)	2 (14.3%)	0 (0%)
I was dealt with courteously at all times	3 (21.4%)	11 (78.6%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
I found my complaint was thoroughly investigated	2 (14.3%)	6 (42.9%)	5 (35.7%)	1 (7.1%)
I received a fair and clear response to my complaint, within an appropriate timescale	3 (21.4%)	6 (42.9%)	5 (35.7%)	0 (0%)

We are satisfied that the complaints handling procedure is easily accessible with the combined response rate for Strongly Agree and Agree being 85.7%. The various methods by which a complaint can be submitted attributes to this.

For the most part, the above responses demonstrate that the complainants were in agreement overall with the handling of their complaints. The combined responses for Strongly Agree and Agree were as follows:

Complaint Handling Point	Combined response for Strongly Agree & Agree
I received a prompt acknowledgement of my complaint	85.7%
I was dealt with courteously at all times	100%
I found my complaint was thoroughly investigated	57.2%
I received a fair and clear response to my complaint, within an appropriate timescale	64.3%

Positive comments were received regarding the complaints handling process, which included:

“I cannot fault the staff who dealt with my complaint. The process was clearly explained, including adapted timelines where needed and they were open with me about expectations and next steps”.

“Making the complaint was easy, going through the process of speaking with the Curriculum Manager was nice and reassuring. I felt I was listened to and was given the time to explain”.

There are 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. Where complainants noted dissatisfaction with areas of the complaints handling process, a follow-up email was issued asking for feedback on how their complaint could have been handled differently. All feedback from complainants will be considered and used to improve service delivery where possible.



## *Learning from Complaints: Service Delivery Improvements*

By recording and analysing complaints data we can identify and address the causes of complaints and, where appropriate, identify training opportunities and introduce service improvements.

Following complaints received in Academic Year 2022-23, service delivery will be improved in the following areas:

### 👉 *Complaints Handling - Complainant feedback*

To encourage completion of the Microsoft Forms feedback survey follow up emails will be sent to complainants if they have not submitted feedback following the first request.

Ensure Complaints Handling Procedure is easily assessable for all complainants. Where complaints indicate that they disagree/strongly disagree with the complaints process being easy to access we will ask suggestions where it could be placed to ensure accessibility.

### 👉 *Complaints Handling – Staff Training*

A LearnNet Complaints Online Training Module has been developed and all staff will be required to complete this either as new training or as a refresher. The Complaints Online Training Module will be available from 11<sup>th</sup> September 2023.

It is anticipated that this training will raise awareness of the complaints handling process and in particular the requirement to adhere to the timescales for actioning complaints, ensuring compliance with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman performance indicators.

### 👉 *Course related – Environmental/Resources*

Students expressed dissatisfaction with space allocation for creative industries courses following the move from Level 2 to the Mezzanine area. To address some of the points raised signage was increased to identify quiet study areas and accessible toilets. Traffic management was implemented to direct staff and students away from learning spaces.

### 👉 *Customer Care*

Feedback from a complainant highlighted a training need regarding the completion of forms relating to our recruitment process. A formal review of the recruitment procedure is being undertaken with the complainant's feedback being utilised as part of the review.

### 👉 *Services*

Cancellation of short courses – Due to staff illness a short course was cancelled on the morning of the planned day of delivery. Cancellation on the day of delivery is not normal practice but unfortunately on this occasion another member of staff was not available to deliver the course. Alternative dates were offered to the complainant, who appeared happy with the outcome and went on to attend the short course on a rescheduled date.

## *Key Observations*

### **Number of complaints received**

More complainants utilised the complaint handling procedure in session 22-23 than in session 21-22. The overall number of complaints has increased significantly from 30 to 51. The number of complaints dealt with at Stage 1 in session 22-23 was slightly higher than the previous session, increasing to 22 from 17. There is a notable increase in the number of Stage 2 complaints, 29 for session 22-23 compared to 13 in session 21-22.

An increase in the number of Stage 2 reports can be attributed to the following factors:

- 👉 2 complaints recorded as Stage 2 due to timescale (received prior to the Christmas break)
- 👉 3 complaints relating to the withdrawal of courses from college offering
- 👉 1 complaint relating to move of creative industries teaching space to another area within the college building. Refurbishment took place prior to session 22-23.

Further analysis on the Stage 2 complaints received in Quarter 1 shows 12 complaints in Session 22-23 compared to 1 in 21/22. Analysis shows that the

complaints received were all isolated and do not pertain to any one key area or team within the college.

### **The number and percentage of complaints at each stage which were closed in full within the set timescales of 5 and 20 working days**

An improvement of 16% for Stage 2 complaints is noted (59% for 22-23 compared to 43% for 21-22). This is attributable to staff who deal with complaints adhering to the 20 working day timescale for complaint investigation and the Performance Team actively sending out deadline date reminders.

For the remainder of the stage 2 complaints, there were various factors which impacted on the adherence to the 20 working day timescale. These included complaints being received during the summer break when key staff were on annual leave, and complexity of complaints which required lengthy communication with the complainants.

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

In accordance with the Complaints Handling Procedure the target for resolution of Stage 1 complaints is 5 days and Stage 2 complaints is 20 days.

In 2022-23 the average time in working days to close a Stage 1 complaint was 3.81 days (3.52 days in 21-22).

In 2022-23 the average time in working days to close a Stage 2 complaint was 18.83 days (29.38 days in 21-22). This is an improvement of 10.55 days per stage 2 complaint.

A proportion of the complaints (75%) received during Quarter 4 were received during summer break where many key staff were on annual leave. Extensions were allocated (in agreement with the complainant) to allow additional time for actioning /investigating complaints.

### **SPSO (Scottish Public Services Ombudsman)**

No complaints relating to Dumfries and Galloway College were submitted to SPSO during Academic Session 2022-2023.

The Performance Team, October 2023