

South Lanarkshire College

Annual Complaints Handling Report Academic Year 2025-26

1. Introduction

1.1 South Lanarkshire College (SLC) has adopted the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) Model Complaints Handling Procedure for Further Education Institutions, ensuring that all complaints are recorded, investigated, and concluded within the prescribed timescales.

1.2 There are four mandatory Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) applicable to further education institutions, which require formal reporting. These are:

- The total number of complaints received;
- The number and percentage of complaints at each stage that were closed in full within the set timescales of five and 20 working days.
- The average time in working days for a full responses to complaints at each stage
- The outcome of complaints at each stage

1.3 The complaint stages are:

- Stage One: for issues that are straightforward and require little to no investigation. These complaints are responded to within 5 working days.
- Stage Two: for issues that are more complex and require investigation or where the customer remains dissatisfied with a Stage 1 response. These complaints are responded to within 20 working days.
- Escalation to the Scottish Public Sector Ombudsman (SPSO) where the customer is dissatisfied with the Stage 2 response.

1.4 There are four complaints outcomes:

- Upheld (where the organisation is at fault)
- Not Upheld (where the organisation is not at fault)
- Partially Upheld (where some parts of the complaint are upheld and others are not) and;
- 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).

- 1.5 In addition to publishing the four mandatory KPIs, the College also provides an overview on complaint trends and any actions taken to improve service delivery.
- 1.6 South Lanarkshire College reports quarterly to the Learning, Teaching and Student Experience (LTSE) sub-committee on the KPIs and analysis of the trends and outcomes of complaints. These reports are also published on the SLC website.

2. Academic Year 2025-26 Key Performance Indicators

2.1 Indicator One: Total Number of Complaints Received

Quarter	Complaints Received Stage 1	Complaints Received Stage 2	Total (and as a % of College Population)
Quarter 1	7	1	8 (0.20%)
Quarter 2	3	1	4 (0.10%)
Quarter 3	5	4	9 (0.225%)
Quarter 4	5	0	5 (0.125%)
Total	20	6	26 (0.65%)

2.1.1 During the reporting period, 26 complaints were received, representing 0.65% of the College population. Most complaints (77%) were handled at Stage 1, with only six complaints being considered at Stage 2. Complaint volumes peaked in Quarter 3, when

9 complaints were received, including 4 Stage 2 complaints. Overall complaint volumes remain low when considered in the context of the College population.

2.2 Indicator Two: Number and Percentage of Complaints at Each Stage that were closed in full within set timescales of five and 20 working days.

Complaint Indicator	Quarter 1		Quarter 2		Quarter 3		Quarter 4		Yearly Total	
Number of complaints closed at Stage 1 and % of total closed in full within the set timescales of five days.	7	100%	2	100%	5	100%	4	100%	18	100%
Number of complaints closed at Stage 1 and % of total closed in full within the set timescales of 10 days when an extension has been granted.			1	100%					1	100%
Number of complaints closed at Stage 2 and % of total closed in full within the set timescales of 20 days.	1	100%	0	0%	4	100%			5	83%
Number of complaints closed at Stage 2 after escalation and % of total closed in full within the set timescales of 20 days.							1	100%	1	100%
Total Complaints	8		3*		9		5		25	

2.2.1 The College achieved 96% compliance with published complaint response times. At Stage 1, 18 complaints were closed within the standard five-working day target. In addition, one Stage 1 complaint required an extension to allow for resolution. At Stage 2, five complaints were resolved within the 20-working day timeframe. *One complaint stage 2 complaint was considered late in terms of the SPSO's guidance due to an extension being granted due to the complexity of the complaint.

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

2.3.1

Complaint Stage	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4
Average time in working days to respond in full at stage 1	5 days	8 days*	6 days	4 days
Average time in working days to respond in full at stage 2	0	32 days**	20 days	0

* The figure is elevated due to one complaint being extended to allow the investigation to be concluded.

**This number is inflated due to a complex complaint which was lodged in November. On the morning the complaint was due for a response, the customer submitted additional information that required further investigation. Due to the Christmas break, enquiries could not be made until January.

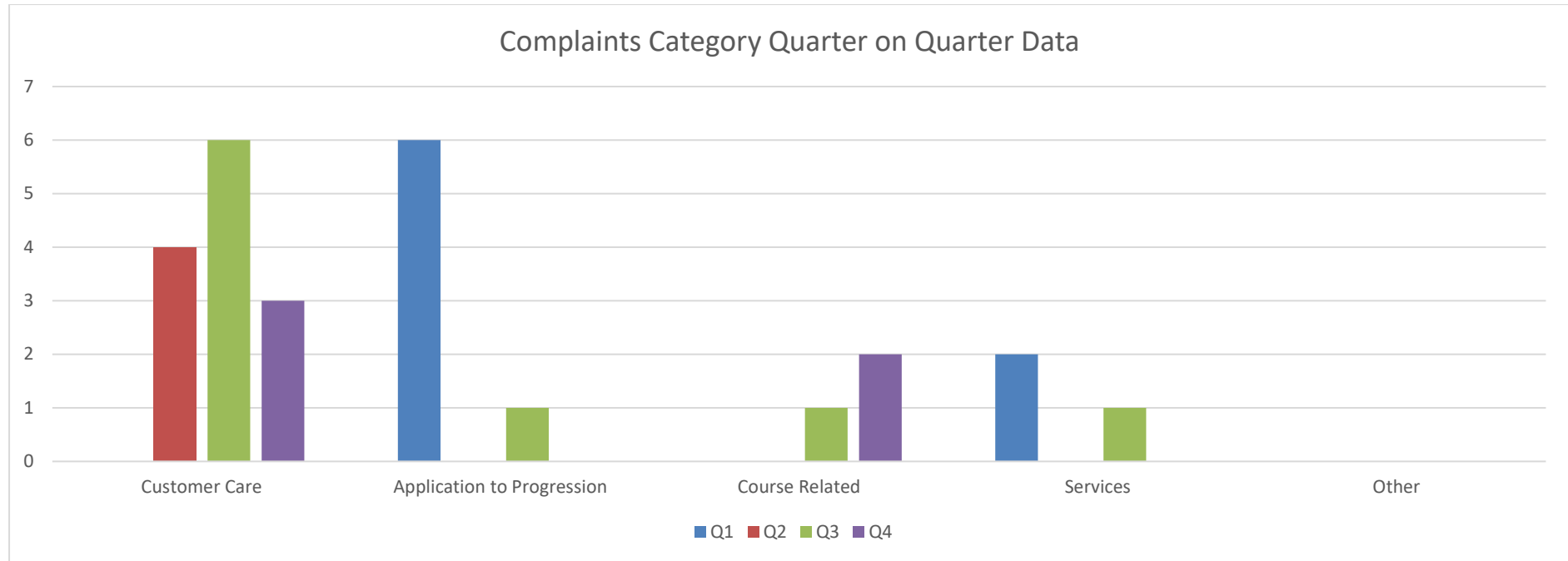
2.4 Indicator Four: The outcome of complaints at each stage

Complaint Indicator	Quarter 1		Quarter 2		Quarter 3		Quarter 4		Yearly Total	
Number and % of complaints resolved at Stage 1			2	50%					2	7.69%
Number and % of complaints partially upheld at Stage 1					1	11.11%			1	3.85%
Number and % of complaints upheld at Stage 1	1	12.5%			3	33.33%	1	20%	5	19.23%
Number and % of complaints not upheld at Stage 1	6	75%			1	11.11%	3	70%	10	38.46%
Number and % of complaints resolved at Stage 2										

Number and % of complaints partially upheld at Stage 2			1	25%	3	33.33%			4	15.38%
Number and % of complaints upheld at Stage 2										
Number and % of complaints not upheld at Stage 2	1	12.5%	1	25%	1	11.11%			3	11.54%
Number and % of complaints resolved at Stage 2 after escalation										
Number and % of complaints partially upheld at Stage 2 after escalation										
Number and % of complaints upheld at Stage 2 after escalation							1	20%	1	3.85%
Number and % of complaints not upheld at Stage 2 after escalation										
Total	8	100%	4	100%	9	100%	4	100%	26	100%

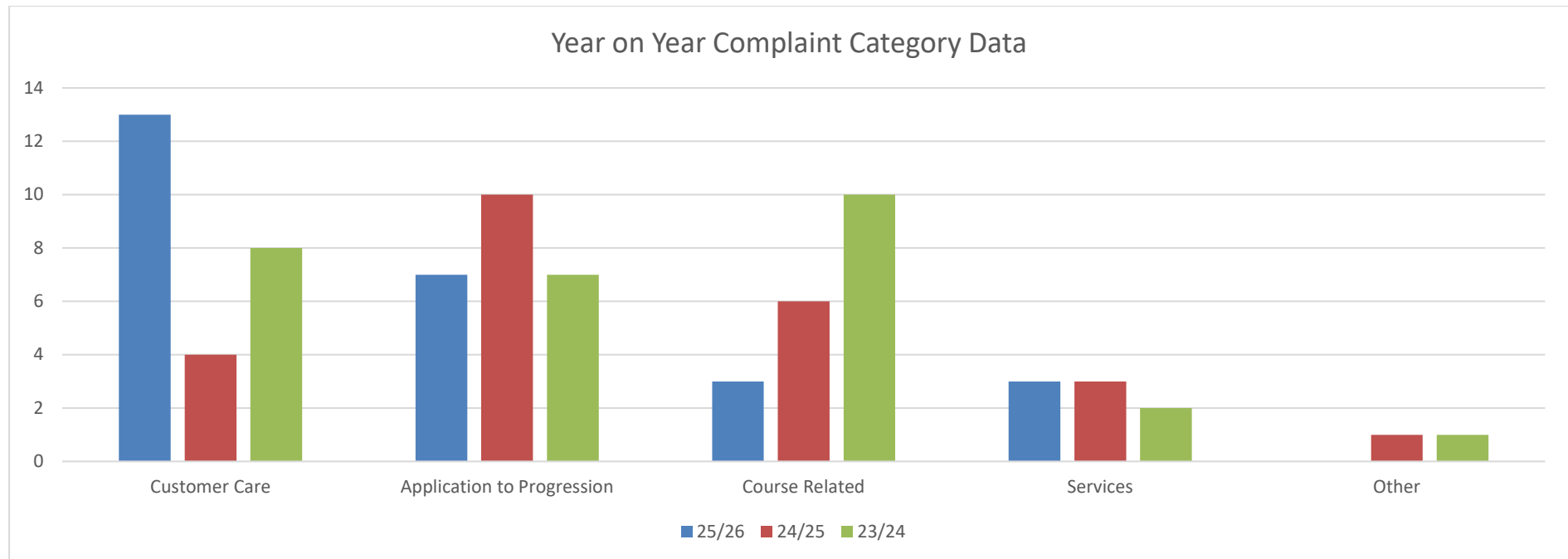
3. Trends and Lessons Learned

3.1 Total Complaints Quarter and Quarter Data



3.1.1 Analysis of complaint categories shows that Customer Care was the most common source of complaints during the year, accounting for 13 of the 26 complaints received. Application to Progression complaints were primarily concentrated in Quarter 1 which aligns with the start of the academic year. Similarly, Course Related complaints increased in Quarters 3 and 4 suggesting a greater focus on academic and learning issues as the year progressed.

3.2



3.2.1 Complaint volumes have remained stable over the past three years. In 2023/24, 28 complaints were received, this number decreased to 24 in 2024/25 before rising again in 2025/6 to 26. Customer care complaints have more than tripled since 2024/25 and this category now accounts for 50% of all complaints received in 2025/26. Following analysis of complaints, a new complaint category will be introduced for 2026-27 for 'Staff Conduct' allowing the College to distinguish complaints relating to staff behaviour from wider customer care issues.

4. Lessons Learned and Actions to Improve

4.1 Where appropriate, the College captures lessons learned and implements actions to support continuous improvement. Ten improvement areas were identified within the quarterly reports, and the corresponding target dates and progress updates are provided below.

Category of Complaint	Actions to Improve	Lead	Target Date/Progress Update
Customer Care	Head of Curriculum to arrange for member of staff to complete CPD in classroom management	Head of Curriculum	Complete.
Customer Care	Staff to be reminded when contacting students that it is best practice to use Teams call function.	Head of Curriculum	Complete.
Customer Care	Staff to uphold consistently professional standards even in challenging situations	Head of Curriculum	Complete.
Customer Care	Staff to be reminded in the value of reflective practice	Head of Curriculum	Complete
Customer Care	Staff to be recognise the impact of behaviour on student experience – students interpret staff behaviour as representative of College's values	Head of Curriculum	Complete
Customer Care	Need for clear expectations and regular training	Head of Curriculum	Ongoing
Application to Progression	Wording on 'welcome interview' e-mail to be updated to provide clarity	CQMs	Complete.
Course Related – Fees	Clearer Fee Communication Process – students will be encouraged at enrolment to seek guidance from the Student Fees Team to confirm the correct fee level for their programme. Lecturing staff will be expected to signpost students to the Student Fees Team, particularly where a learner on a PTFG structure considers taking on additional units that may increase their total fee liability beyond the full-time rate.	Lecturing Staff	Start of academic sessions

Course Related – Fees	College to undertake a review of its website to ensure that tuition fee information is transparent, consistent and easily accessible.	CQMs, Finance Dept	Start of academic sessions
Customer Care	New complaint category to be introduced for academic year 26-27 for 'staff conduct'	Complaints Handler	Complete.