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Paper X

COVER SHEET FOR PAPERS TO BE CONSIDERED BY EXECUTIVE TEAM

Q1 Complaints Handling Report 2024/25	
Date of Meeting:	25 November 2024
Purpose of Paper:	To report key performance information on complaints handling to the Executive Team (ET), including the volume and types of complaints recorded by the University during the first quarter of the academic year 2024/25.
Intended Outcome:	ET is invited to note the information provided, as required by the University's Complaints Handling Policy.
Paper Submitted by:	Wesley Rennison, Director of Strategy & Planning
Prior Committee Approvals:	N/A
Financial Implications:	None
Reserved Business:	No
Key Contact(s):	Chris Mochan, Complaints & Corporate Governance Officer Chris.Mochan@strath.ac.uk
Date of Production:	19 November 2024

Complaints Handling: 2024/25 Quarter 1 Report

Complaints Handling

1. In April 2021, the University formally implemented the SPSO's revised Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP) in 2020. All staff at the University are able to access the compulsory frontline training required, under the CHP through MyPlace. This is a requirement for induction. These materials, along with additional guidance and templates, are also available to all staff on MyPlace for refresher training and ongoing reference. (<https://classes.myplace.strath.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=26168>)
2. It should be noted that Strategy and Planning are working with the Complaints Higher Education Forum to produce new complaints training for both frontline and investigations. It is expected that this will be ready to roll out in early 2025.

Complaints Reporting

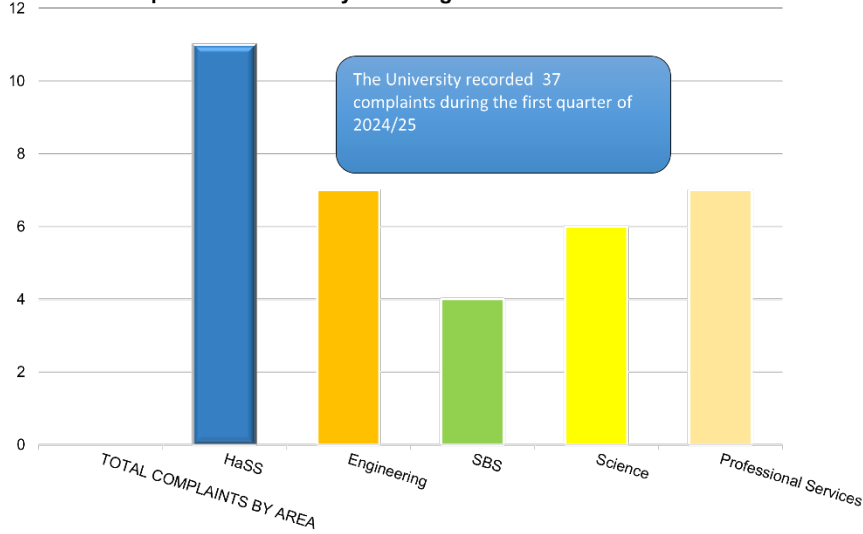
1. It is a regulatory requirement that the University reports key performance information on complaints quarterly to senior officers (Executive Team) and annually to Court. The new Complaints Sharepoint site, which was launched on 1 February 2024 allows reporting in line with the SPSO's Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) which the University has been reporting on since 2022/23.
2. Annex A provides key performance information on the volume and types of complaints received during the first quarter of 2024/25 and on the resolution times achieved. Annex B looks at comparable data from the first quarter dating back to 2021/22. Annex C provides qualitative information on some of the actions taken and/or recommendations made to deliver service improvement in response to complaints received by the University during the quarter.
3. The University recorded 36 complaints during the first quarter of 2024/25, three more than in 2023/24, with 35 logged at the frontline stage and one dealt with directly at Investigation. 31 of those complaints were from students, two were from the member of the public, two were from applicants for study and one was made anonymously. Complaints were received across all of the Faculties and Professional Services. The most frequent types of complaints recorded were those relating to:
 - Staff Attitude and/or Conduct (20%)
 - University Policy and/or Procedures (17%)
 - Reasonable Adjustment/Disability Related & Teaching and/or Assessment (13%)
4. Staff Attitude and/or Conduct complaints were spread across University Faculties and Departments, with a number of different issues investigated. Two of the complaints were resolved and only one was taken forward to the Investigation stage. The majority of University Policy and Procedures complaints related to instances where students were no longer studying at the University, with specific complaints relating to the Withdrawal process, the Criminal Convictions Panel and Fitness to Practice hearings. Reasonable Adjustment/Disability Related were unusually high in the first quarter and primarily related to the failure to provide relevant adjustments to help facilitate the learning of those students that require to accommodate in different ways. Three of these complaints were upheld and two are currently still being investigated.
5. The average time taken to resolve frontline complaints decreased from 8.5 days in the previous quarter to 6.9 days, with 29% of complaints closing within the 5 working day timescale target, down from 38% in the fourth quarter. Although the number of complaints resolved within 5 working days has again fallen, we have also seen a fall in the number of frontline complaints taking more than 10 working days to resolve.

6. The average time taken to investigate complaints handled directly at stage 2 increased from 21.5 days to 64.4 days. Although this represents a significant increase in the time to respond, this was primarily due to a single complaint which involved a school placement, and was delayed by the placement school conducting their own investigation.
7. Only one complaint dealt with directly at the Investigation stage and nine were escalated to investigation by the complainant. Of those completed, two were partially upheld and six not upheld.
8. The below table breaks down the total number of complaints received in this quarter and the equivalent quarter in 2023/24.

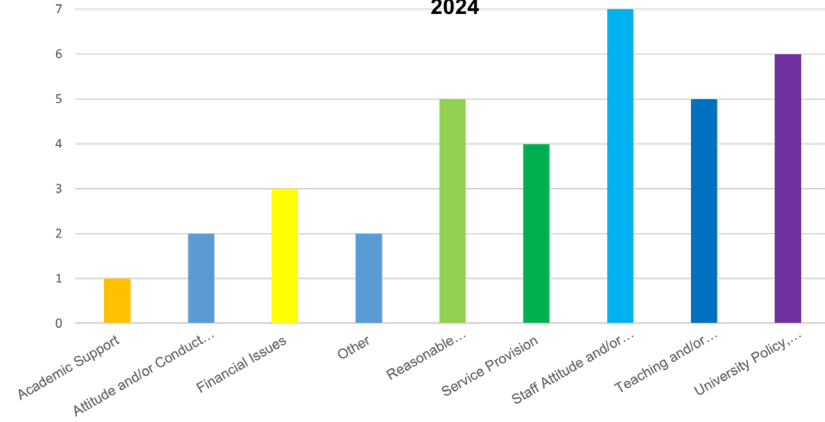
Faculty	Q1 2024/25	Q1 2023/24	Change	% Change
HAAS	11	11	0	0
Engineering	7	7	0	0
Business	4	6	-2	-50%
Science	6	2	+4	+60%
Total	28	26	+2	7%

9. The number of Faculty complaints was very similar to last year with 28 complaints received compared to 26 in Quarter 1 of 2023/24. The biggest change was the increase in Science complaints, although a total of six is still a low number.
10. The University has received requests for information from the SPSO in relation to two complaints in the first quarter of 2024/25 quarter, none of which have been taken forward for investigation.
11. Frontline complaints may be classified as 'upheld', 'not upheld' or 'resolved'. 14% of frontline complaints were resolved which is an increase of 4% on the previous quarter

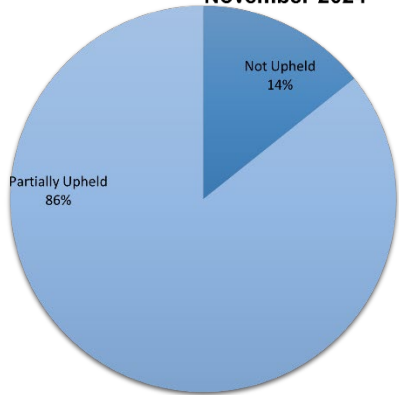
Complaints Received by Area August 2024 - November 2024



Complaints Received, by Category - August 2024 - November 2024



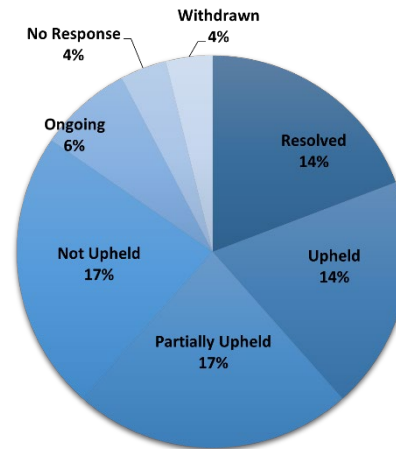
Direct Investigation (Stage 2) Outcomes - August 2024 - November 2024



Average investigation = 64.4 working days

Seven of the eight complaints handled directly at Investigation, were responded to outwith the twenty working days.

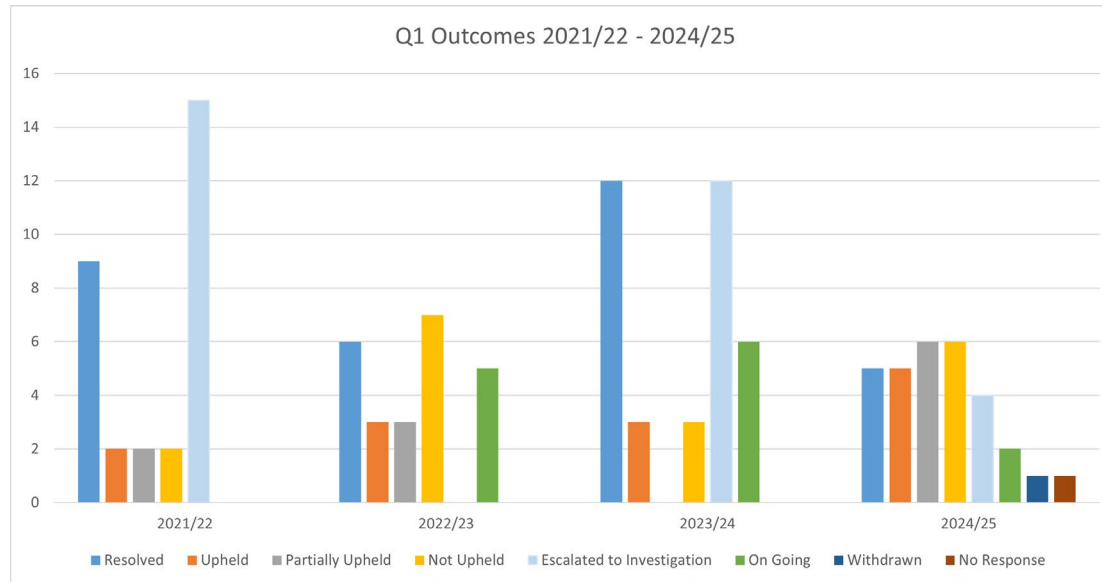
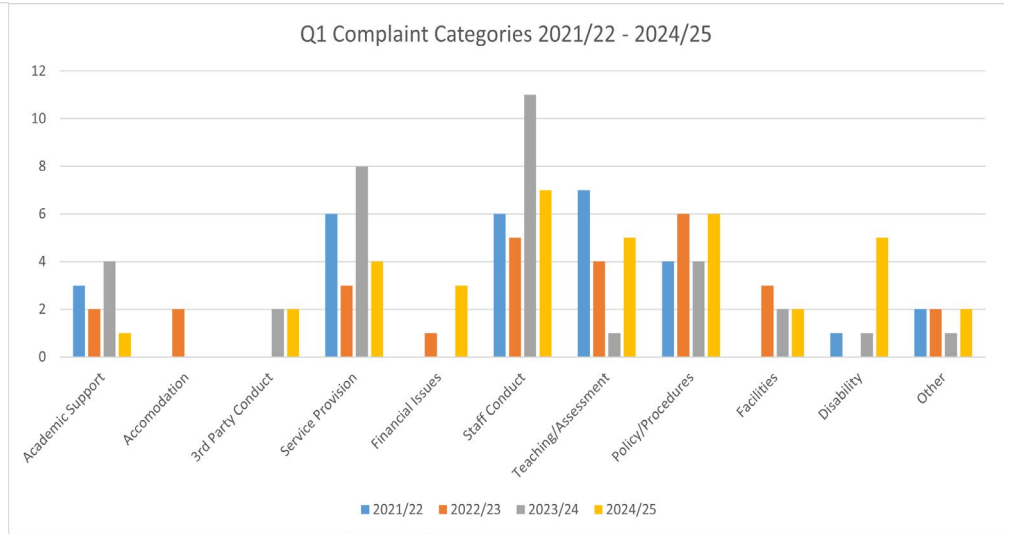
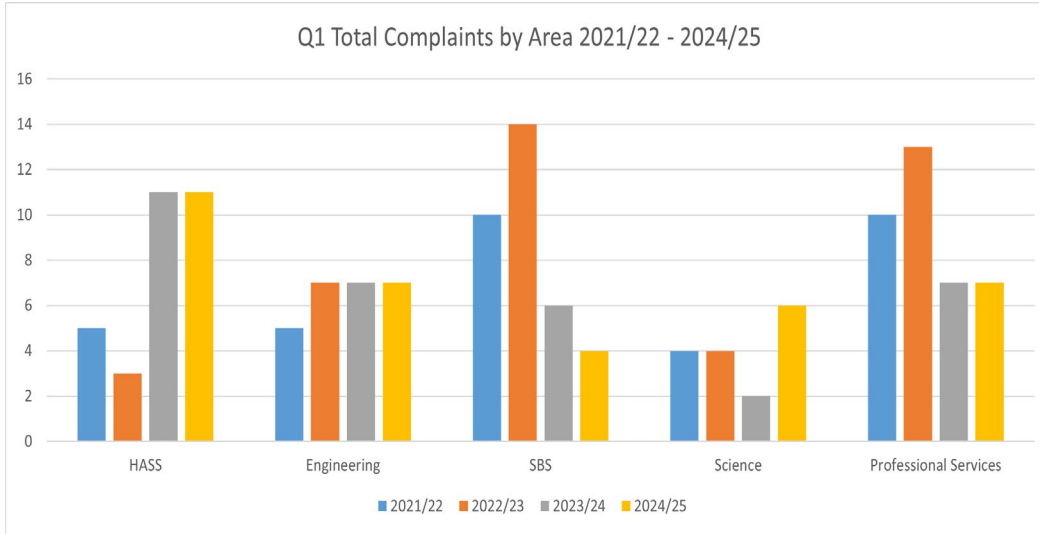
Frontline Resolution (Stage 1) - August 2024 - November 2024



29% of complaints closed at the Frontline stage were handled within 5 working days.

Average resolution time for complaints resolved at Frontline = 6.9 working days.

ANNEX B



Learning from Complaints – Examples from 1 May 2024 – 31 July 2024

Complaint Category	Complainant	Complaint Summary	Outcome	Learning
University Policies and/or Procedures	Applicant for Study	Complaint received about the potential transfer from another University to Strathclyde		The Initial complaint was received via email from a relative of the applicant, and not the actual applicant. Once contact was made with the applicant, it was established that they did not want to make a complaint. Teams must ensure they are speaking with the individual who is complaining. If someone is complaining on their behalf, then the University must seek the relevant permissions from the complainant to for someone to act on their behalf.
Reasonable Adjustment/Disability Related	Student/or Former Student	Complaint from student undertaking the MSc within the Centre for Lifelong Learning (CLL) about lack of student support from CLL team and central Disability Services.	Partially Upheld	The CLL should review provision for supporting disabled students to ensure that all staff members are aware of how to access advice from a designated disability contact person. If adjustments are put in place over and above those indicated in provisional adjustment recommendations from D&W, we recommend that these be immediately communicated to the student concerned. We recommend that a review also considers whether additional support should be provided specifically to distance learning students.
Other	Student/or Former Student	Complainant raised concerns about accessing information in relation to the possibility of studying abroad as well as the assessment and feedback in relation to two modules of study and communication of the degree classifications.	Partially Upheld	Information relating to studying abroad was out of date. There must be regular checks to ensure the information on MyPlace is up to date. With regards to assessment and feedback, anything provided verbally should be followed up formally either via email or on MyPlace.