

COVER SHEET FOR PAPERS TO BE CONSIDERED BY EXECUTIVE TEAM

Q1 Complaints Handling Report 2025/26	
Date of Meeting:	16 December 2025
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 2025/26.
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
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Complaints Handling: 2025/26 Quarter 1 Report

Complaints Handling and Overview of the Procedure

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 and new and updated investigation training is with OSDU at present with first sessions expected in January 2026.
2. The University's Complaints Handling Procedure involves up to two stages.

Stage One – Frontline Response

Seeks to respond to straightforward complaints swiftly and effectively at the source of the concern or issue.

Stage Two – Investigation

Appropriate where a complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome of frontline resolution and requires escalation, or where frontline resolution is not possible or appropriate due to the complexity or seriousness of the case.

Complaints Received

3. University colleagues welcome the opportunities for learning and reflection that arise through the Complaints Handling process. There is a continuing focus on ensuring that students, members of the University community and those who interact with the University are made aware of and have access to the Complaints Handling Procedure.
4. During the first quarter of 2025/26, the University received a total of 33 complaints, broken down as follows:

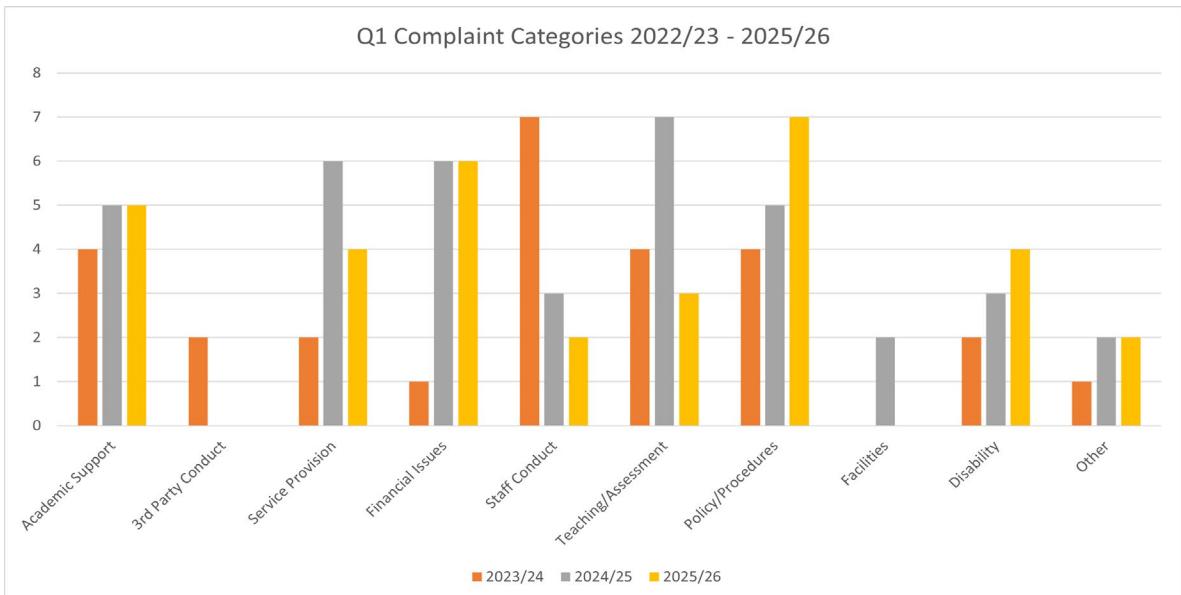
Total Number of Complaints	33
Received as a Frontline complaint	30
Received Directly at Investigation	3
Escalated from Frontline to Investigation	7

5. The total received in this quarter represents a decrease of 8.3% in comparison to the same quarter in 2024/25 when a total of 36 complaints were received.
6. Of the 33 complaints received, 26 were students which represents 79% of the total received, a decrease of 7% in comparison to the first quarter of 2024/25. The remainder of the complaints were comprised of four complaints from Applicants for Study and three from Members of the Public.

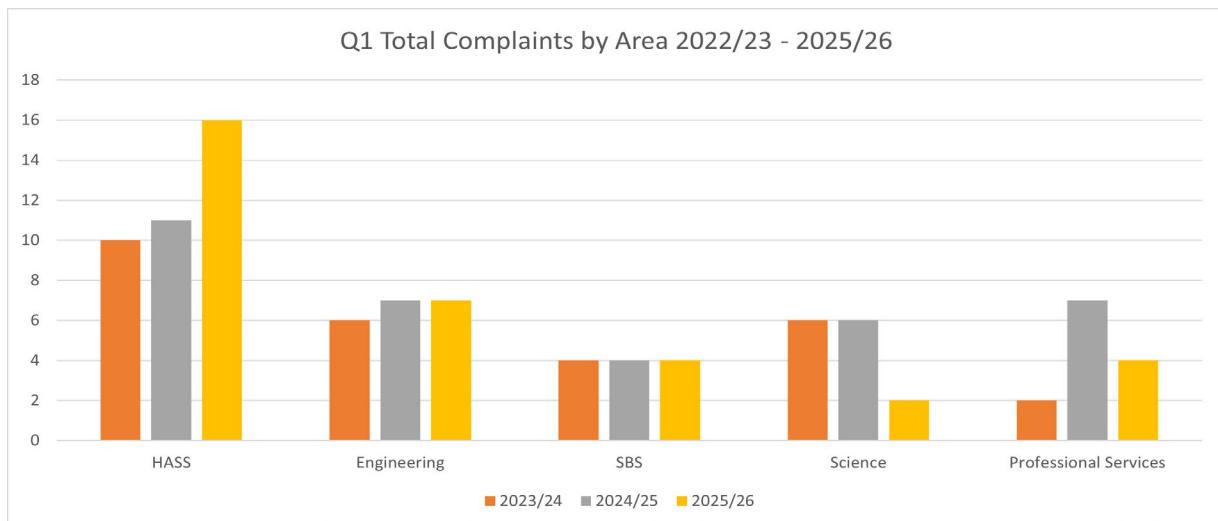
Category of Complainant	No. Of Complaints	Proportion of Total Complaints	Variance in Proportion from Q1 24/25
Student	26	79%	-7%
Applicant	4	12%	+9%
Member of Public	3	9%	+3%

Categories of Complaints

7. Complaints were received across all of the Faculties and a breakdown of categories is outlined below, compared to prior years.



8. The below graph breaks down the number of complaints received by each Faculty and Professional Services.



Complaint Category Trends

9. In terms of the nature of the complaints we received:

- The two main categories in the first quarter of this year consisted of complaints about Policies and Procedures (21%) and Financial Issues (18%).
- The Policies and Procedures complaints related to a number of different issues including funded scholarships, the University Honours Years Policy and financial processes.
- The number of Financial Issue complaints remained the same as this time last year. The University does normally receive a higher number of these at the beginning of the academic year. The majority of the complaints received related to tuition fees.
- We are anticipating an increase in complaints in relation to Financial Issues, particularly with the greater focus on student debt and implementation of sanctions. Work has been ongoing with Finance and Student Experience in order to be able to deal with these as efficiently and as consistently as possible when they are received.
- There were four complaints from Applicants for Study in the first quarter of 2025/26, only one less than we received in the whole of 2024/25. The majority related to procedure and policies around funding applications.
- Academic support, Teaching and/or Assessment and Staff Conduct complaints all decreased in comparison to last year.

- There was an increase in Disability and Reasonable Adjustment complaints although three of the four complaints were from the same complainant who has been appointed one point of contact.
- We are still experiencing more complex complaints covering a wide array of topics and we expect this to continue throughout the year.

Complaint Responses

10. The University aims to resolve Stage One complaints within five working days, and Stage Two complaints within 20 working days in line with the Complaints Handling Procedure. In addition, the University is proactive in seeking to resolve complaints, in keeping with [SPSO Good practice guidance](#).
11. Complaint response times in the first quarter of 2025/26, based on complaints that have been fully concluded, are as follows:
 - 63% of complaints at Frontline were responded to within five days, up from 43% in the previous quarter. The average time taken to respond was 6.8 days.
 - 50% of complaints at Investigation were responded to within 20 days, up from 33% in the previous quarter. The average time taken to respond was 25 days.
 - There were seven Frontline complaints escalated to Investigation by the complainant. 50% of these were responded to within 20 days.
12. To support and enhance the complaints response process, the following activity was undertaken:
 - Legal Services have produced supplementary legally privileged guidance for Investigators to help them identify when they should seek help from colleagues in Legal Services. A final version of the guidance is being prepared for distribution in the New Year, and we anticipate that this will help guide colleagues when dealing with complex complaints.
 - On 30 October 2025, the complaints representatives from Faculties and Professional Services met. This meeting was well attended and provided a good opportunity to discuss concerns and share best practice.

Complaint Outcomes

13. There are four complaint outcome categories available: resolved, upheld, partially upheld, not upheld.
14. Complaints where the outcome is 'upheld' or 'partially upheld' are those which the University has identified where something has gone wrong. Complaints where the outcome was 'not upheld' may nevertheless remain helpful to inform service improvement, and recommendations are sometimes still made even though the complaint has not been upheld.
15. Of Frontline complaints fully responded to in Quarter 1 of 2025/26, 11% were resolved and the majority were not upheld (29%). Outcomes of the complaints fully responded to at Frontline in the first quarter of 2025/26 were as follows:

Outcome	Number of Stage 1 Complaints
Resolved	4
Upheld	5
Partially Upheld	2
Not Upheld	10

16. Investigation complaints are often complex in nature and require careful consideration. Outcomes of the complaints fully responded to at Investigation were as follows:

Outcome	Number of Stage 2 Complaints
Resolved	0
Upheld	1
Partially Upheld	1
Not Upheld	6

17. Some complaints that are received at Frontline go on to be considered as Investigations. This is where the complaint has not been resolved for the complainant, or where the complainant was not satisfied by the outcome at the Frontline. The outcomes of the complaints fully responded to in the first quarter of 2025/26 which were escalated from Frontline to Investigations were as follows:

Outcome	Number of Stage 2 Complaints
Upheld	1
Not Upheld	2

Action and Learning from Complaints

18. As part of the complaints process, relevant University teams are expected to routinely reflect on the outcomes of complaints and consider any lessons that can be learnt. Where investigations identify areas of practice that could be improved or enhanced, recommendations are made within the complaint response and progressed by the relevant Faculty or Directorate.

19. In concluding some complaints, specific recommendations for change or enhancement may be made. Some of the recommendations made following outcomes from both frontline and investigation complaints in Q1 are set out in the table below.

Complainant	Complaint	Recommendation
Student	Complainant had requested certificates of completion on four separate occasions and the request wasn't actioned.	Certificate of Completion production process to be shared with all admin support staff.
Applicant for Study	Incorrect information provided to potential applicant.	Update information with PGDE Selection team on entry requirements for languages.
Student	The student's course was cancelled and had not yet had their fees refunded.	A review to take place of the process that follows the cancellation of a course and subsequent refund to students
Student	Student complained after a lecturer commented on their choice of clothing	The Faculty will take steps to ensure that all staff within are reminded of the Dignity and Respect policy, the Strathclyde Community Commitment, and their responsibilities under these.