



COVER SHEET FOR PAPERS TO BE CONSIDERED BY EXECUTIVE TEAM

Q2 Complaints Handling Report 2025/26	
Date of Meeting:	3 March 2026
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 second 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 2 Report

Complaints Handling and Overview of the Procedure

1. In April 2021, the University formally implemented the SPSO's revised Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP). 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 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 second quarter of 2025/26, the University received a total of 32 complaints, broken down as follows:

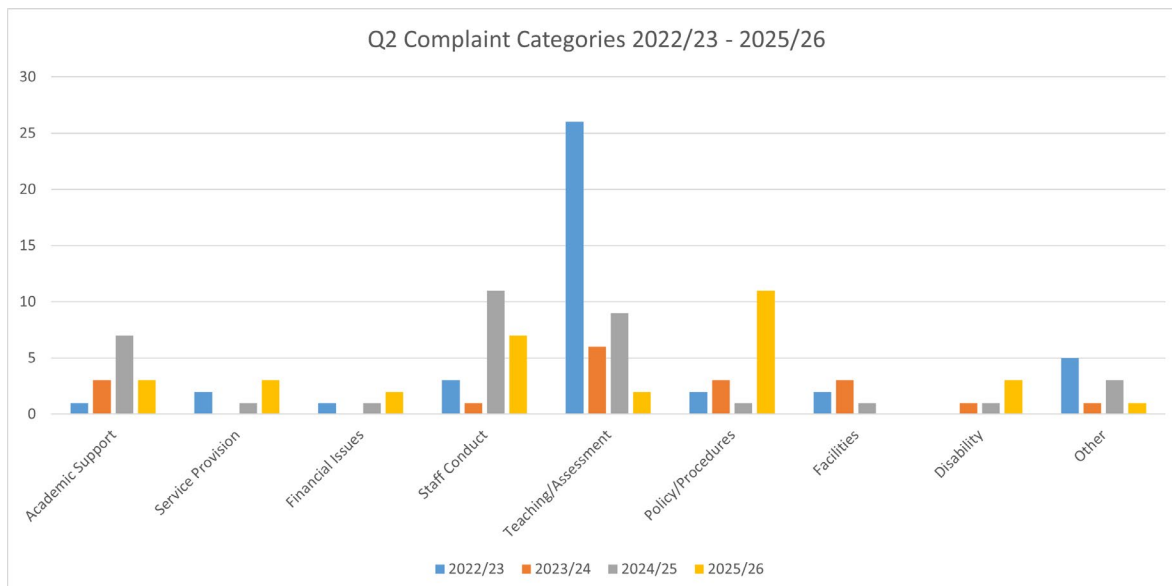
Total Number of Complaints	32
Received as a Frontline complaint	21
Received Directly at Investigation	11
Escalated from Frontline to Investigation	6

5. The total received in this quarter represents a decrease of 20% in comparison to the same quarter in 2024/25 when a total of 40 complaints were received.
6. Of the 32 complaints, 30 were from students which represents 94% of the total complainants, the same proportion compared to the first quarter of 2024/25. The remainder of the complaints were comprised of one complaint from Members of the Public and one anonymous complaint.

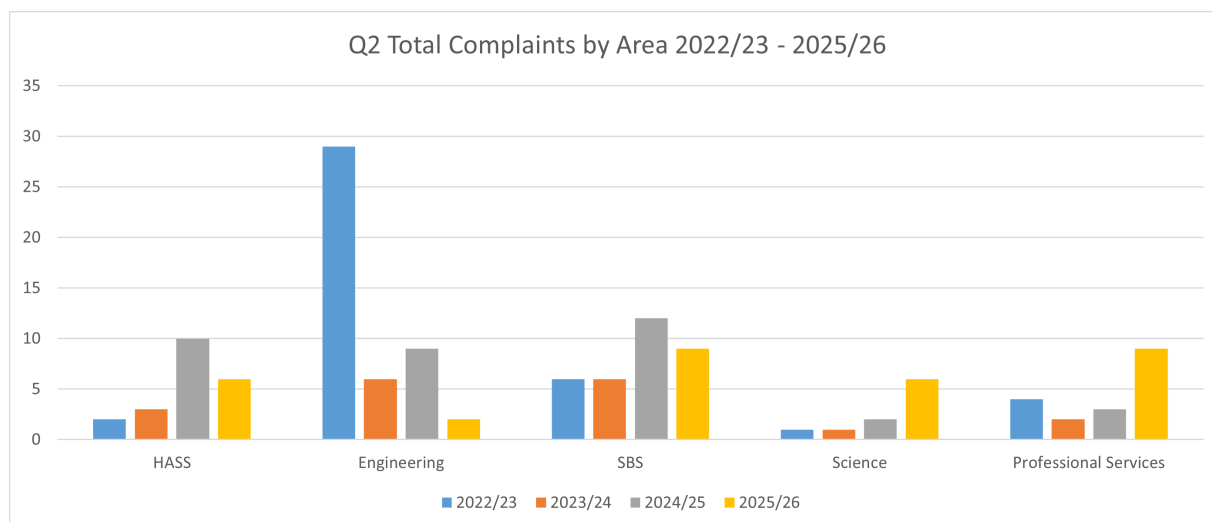
Category of Complainant	No. Of Complaints	Proportion of Total Complaints	Variance in Proportion from Q2 24/25
Student	30	94%	0%
Anonymous	1	3%	+3%
Member of Public	1	3%	+3%

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 complained about in the 2nd quarter were Policies and Procedures (34%) and Staff Attitude and/or Conduct. (22%).
- Most complaints in quarter 2 came from the Business School (28%) and Professional Services (28%).
- We are trying to ensure that PS departments are answering complaints relevant to their areas, rather than the responsibility being shouldered by the Faculties, which may explain the increase in PS complaints.
- The Policies and Procedures complaints were the most complained about for the second quarter in a row and were spread across Faculties and Professional Services. These related to a number of different issues including compulsory withdrawals, placements, voluntary suspensions and module contents.
- This quarter saw an unusually high number of direct investigations with 11 complaints logged. The main themes were support provision, financial issues, both tuition fees and debt recovery and support for disabilities and neurodivergence.
- We are experiencing the anticipated 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 was an increase in staff attitude and/or conduct complaints from quarter 1 to quarter 2. Two of these have been upheld and 3 moved to investigation.
- There was a decrease in both service provision and reasonable adjustment complaints from quarter 1. Five of the six total complaints related to a perceived lack of support with one complaint upheld, two not upheld and three partially upheld.
- We are still experiencing more complex complaints covering a wide array of topics and we expect this to continue throughout the year.

Complaint Responses

- 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](#).
- Complaint response times in the second quarter of 2025/26, based on complaints that have been fully concluded, are as follows:
 - 59% of complaints at Frontline were responded to within five days, down from 63% in the previous quarter. The average time taken to respond to was 5 days, down from 6.8 days in the previous quarter and within the stipulated timeframe set out by the SPSO.
 - 81% of complaints at Investigation stage were responded to within 20 days, up from 50% in the previous quarter. The average time taken to respond was 21 days.
 - There were Six Frontline complaints escalated to Investigation by the complainant. 50% of these were responded to within 20 days.
- To support and enhance the complaints response process, the following activity was undertaken:
 - Legal Services have produced supplementary guidance for Investigators to help them identify when they should seek help from colleagues in Legal Services. A final version of the guidance has been sent to relevant colleagues and feedback sought before the guidance is published.

Complaint Outcomes

- There are four complaint outcome categories available: resolved, upheld, partially upheld, not upheld.
- 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.
- Of Frontline complaints fully responded to in Quarter 1 of 2025/26, upheld and not upheld accounted for the majority of outcomes, each representing 31% of the total. 25% of complaints were partially upheld and 12.5% were resolved at the frontline stage. 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	2
Upheld	5
Partially Upheld	4
Not Upheld	5

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	1
Upheld	1
Partially Upheld	4
Not Upheld	10

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	4
Partially Upheld	4

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 Q2 are set out in the table below.

Complainant	Complaint	Recommendation
Student	MBA Student unhappy with procedural action that was taken regarding the evaluation of his MBA project.	A review of the MyMBA project submission area is being undertaken and the submission process will be enhanced to ensure that the correct feedback form is automatically aligned with each student's project pathway.
Student	Student transferred to PhD Plus programme from PhD which required additional tuition fees for the 2025/26 academic session which student said they were not aware of prior to transfer.	The Department would review their communications to students regarding the PhD Plus and ensure future communications contain clear information on the programme fee and how it compares to a standard PhD fee. This information should also be given to students during the consolidation week presentation and made available on the Department MyPlace page. The Faculty should review the PhD Plus fee structure and ensure all Departments are aware of how this enhanced PhD is charged.
Student	Student complaint regarding failed placement without adequate support.	The investigator recommended that the department review their procedures to consider what restorative options were available if a complaint were to be upheld to restore the student's position where practicable (e.g., alternative placement planning) without causing academic disadvantage.

