

COMPLAINTS HANDLING ANNUAL REPORT

ACADEMIC YEAR SEPTEMBER 2023 – AUGUST 2024

1. Background

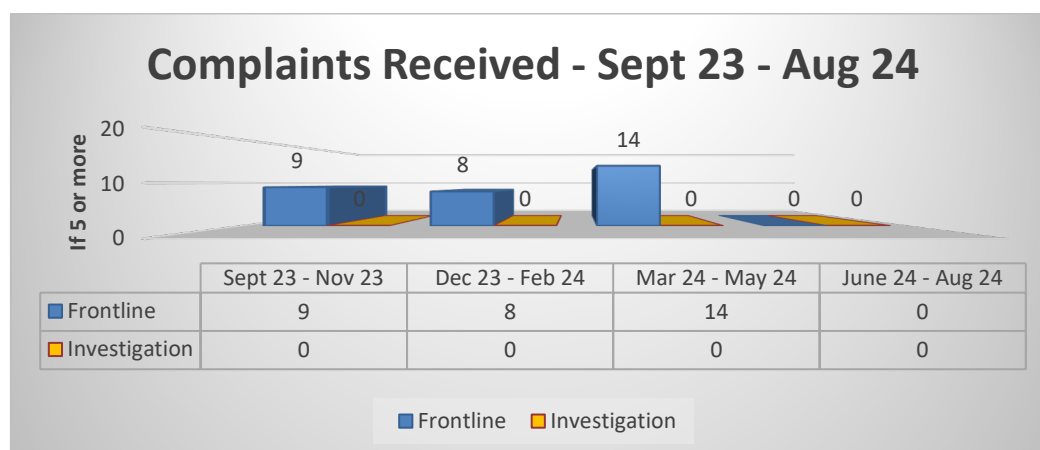
In common with all other Scottish Higher and Further Education Institutions, SRUC introduced a Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP) in August 2013. The introduction and content of the CHP was driven by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO). An updated Model Complaints Handling Procedure (MCHP) was introduced by SPSO and implemented by SRUC in April 2021. This report provides a summary and analysis of complaints handled by SRUC in the Academic Year 2023–2024.

The updated MCHP procedure continues to use two internal stages, Frontline Resolution (Stage 1) by the provider of the service and Investigation (Stage 2) by a neutral independent investigation officer. The emphasis is on the prompt resolution of complaints at the point closest to their occurrence. After the Investigation stage has concluded a complainant, if still dissatisfied, can appeal externally to the SPSO.

Due to the requirement of publishing complaints data, in line with many other organisations, we are not publishing data less than 5 so that individual cases cannot be identified. Column titles indicate areas where complaints were received.

2. Annual Complaints Data

2.1 Number of Complaints received (if 5 or more)



Academic Year	Total number of complaints recorded	From members of the public	From or on behalf of students (includes applicants)
2023-2024	39	7	32

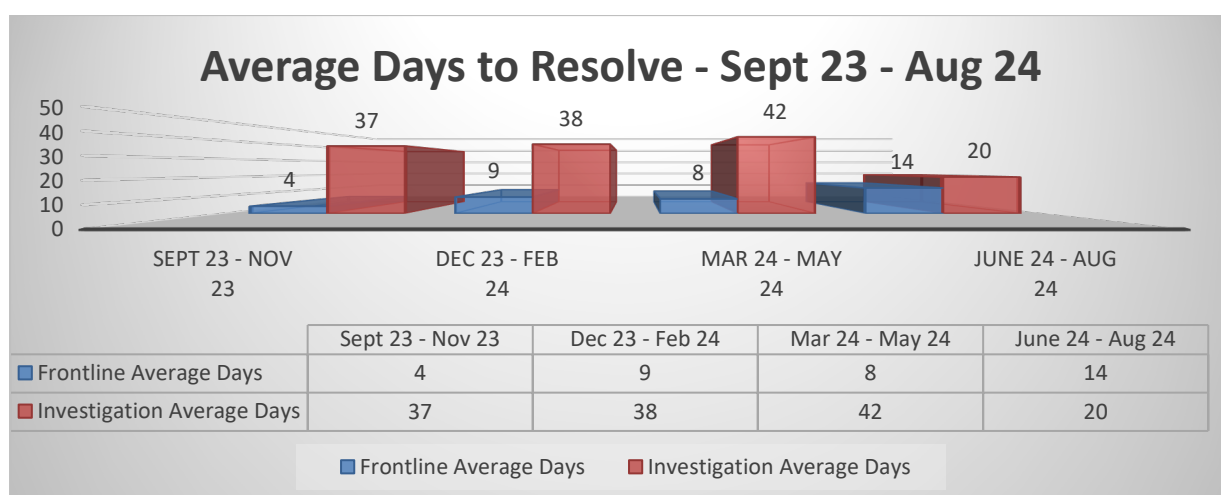
The above figures also reflect five Stage 1 complaints recorded further as a Stage 2 complaint after escalation, which is an increase on the previous year.

Complaints received regarding staff were, on occasion, referred for review under SRUC’s HR policies and procedures. Complaints in respect of commercial services, for example, related to services offered by SAC Commercial are not recorded in the CHP but are subject to separate procedures. In the previous year 12 complaints were recorded, 3 of which were from members of the public.

2.2 Time taken to deal with complaints

The SPSO target timescales for resolving complaints are 5 working days for Frontline Resolution and 20 working days for Investigation cases. It is not always possible to deal with complaints within these time scales due to holidays, illness or occasionally because a complaint is complex and involves liaising with a number of individuals.

This chart sets out the average number of working days taken to resolve complaints.



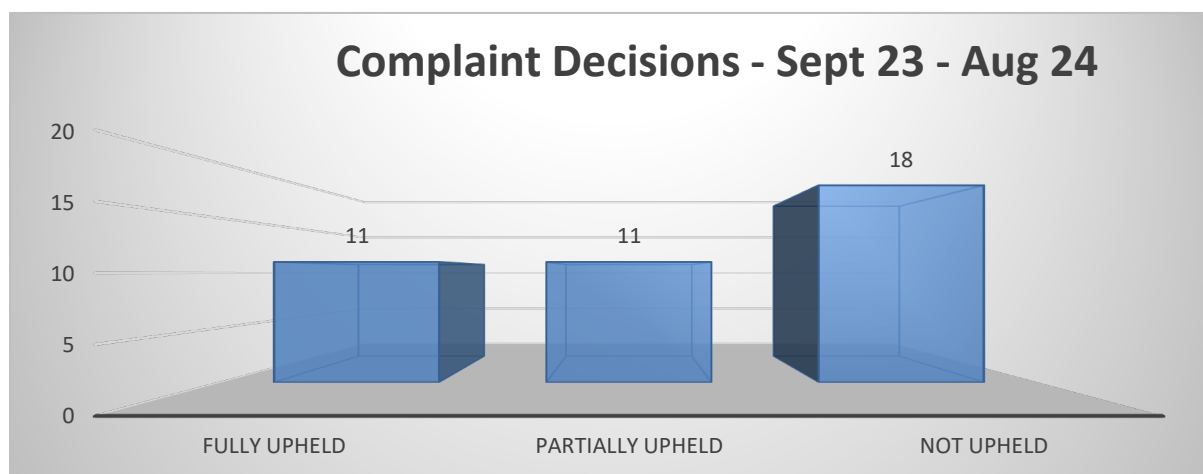
The target dates for dealing with Stage 2 complaints were not achieved in all but one of the Stage 2 complaints received. In all of the cases the reason for this was the need to collate the information required from

various members of staff during the full investigations within the time limits imposed by the CHP for responding.

Half of the Stage 1 complaints met the required target dates, and holiday breaks were the main reason for those front line resolutions that did not meet the target of five days. Complainants were kept updated by the complaint responders in terms of timelines, and did agree to extensions where required. In comparison with last year, timescales during 2023/24 to resolve complaints were longer than the previous year.

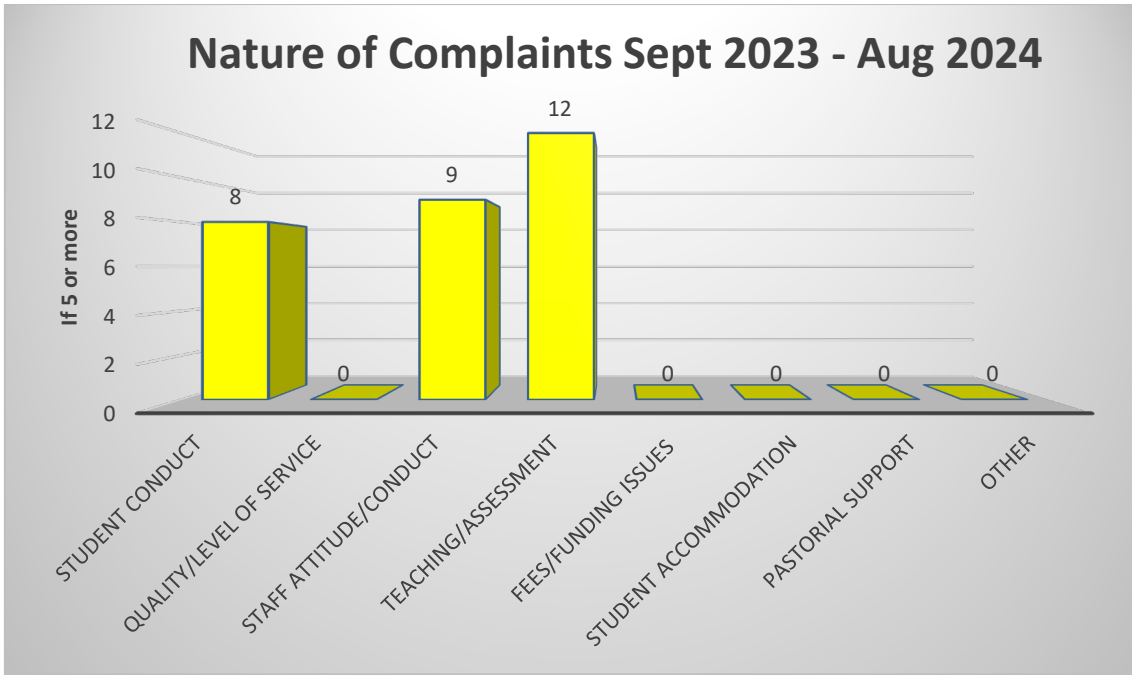
2.3 Complaint Decisions

The following chart summarises the decisions made during the year. A little under half of the complaints were not upheld, with a little under a quarter of the complaints being fully upheld and, the rest being partially upheld. Last year, a third were not upheld, with over a third being partially upheld. So there has been an increase in the number of complaints upheld in 2023/24.



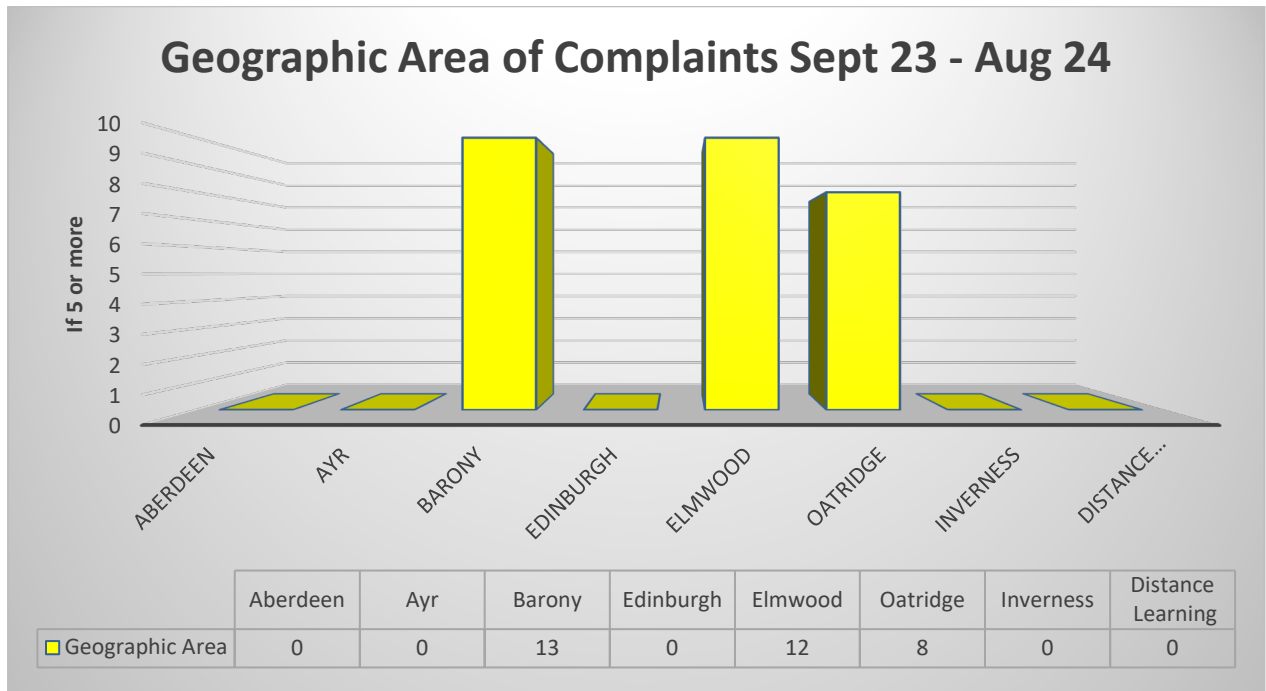
2.4 Nature of Complaints

Of the complaints received during the academic year 2023–2024 most have been made with the Academic Division. The following graph sets out the category of complaints received, where complaints received have numbered over 5. Due to the requirement of publishing complaints data, in line with many other organisations, we are not publishing data less than 5 so that individual cases cannot be identified. Column titles indicate areas where less than 5 complaints were received. In common with last year, complaints were received in the area of teaching and assessment, and behaviours.



2.5 Geographical area of complaints received

SRUC currently deliver from seven locations across Scotland and run No Campus/Distance Learning Courses. The graph below shows the geographic locations of where complaints originated from if known (if 5 or more). There is no comparative data with last year as there were no complaints greater than 5 at any of the campuses.



3. Learning Points and Comparison with Previous Year

SRUC have seen a large increase in the number of complaints made, and an increase in the amount of time to respond to these complaints. Complaints last year were spread across campuses and no campus had as many as 5 complaints. This year 33 of the 39 complaints received were at Barony, Elmwood and Oatridge,

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