west lothian college

Annual Complaints Handling Summary Report 2025-26

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Introduction

This report is published in response to requirements by the Scottish Public Sector Ombudsman (SPSO) to reporting complaints against defined indicators and publicising complaints information. As obliged by legislation, we follow the SPSO Model Complaints Handling Procedure (MCHP) in dealing with all complaints as well as following their guidance on Child Friendly Complaints.

The report includes mandatory reporting and publishing of complaints performance statistics, complaints trends and outcomes, and actions taken to improve services.

In addition to meeting our statutory reporting requirement, the report illustrates the importance we attach to complaints and our commitment to improve our services through learning from complaints and other feedback which we continually seek and act on.

In addition to this annual report, which is published annually on our website, we also report on complaints to the Board of Governors Audit Sub-Committee on a quarterly basis and use complaints proactively to inform continuous improvement, including in our annual Self-Evaluation and Action Plan (SEAP) and Institution Led Quality Review (ILQR) processes.

Indicator One: The total number of complaints received

The sum of the number of complaints received at Stage 1 (this includes escalated complaints as they were first received at Stage 1), and the number of complaints received directly at Stage 2.

Level	Upheld	Part Upheld	Not Upheld	Resolved	Open	Total
Level 1	14	9	17	7	0	**47**
Level 2	1	5	4	1	4	**15**
TOTAL	**15**	**14**	**21**	**8**	**4**	**62**

Indicator Two: 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 number of complaints closed in full at stage 1, stage 2 and after escalation within MCHP timescales as percentage of all stage 1, stage 2 and escalated complaints responded to in full.

Criteria	Measure
Level 1 Complaints	47
Level 1 Closed within 5 days deadline	49%
Extended Level 1 deadline	17

Level 2 Complaints	15
Level 2 Closed within 20 days deadline	40%
Number Escalated L1 – L2	3
Open Complaints	4
TOTAL	62

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

The average (mean) time in working days to respond at stage 1, stage 2 and after escalation.

	Average (mean) response time
Level 1 Complaints	7.3 days
Level 2 Complaints	22.0 days plus two still open
Escalated Complaints	13.25 days plus two still open

Where complaints are not met within the deadlines, these were dealt with as proactively as possible, but they exceeded deadlines due to delays in complainants responding to emails, staff absence including annual leave and staff disciplinary investigations. Where investigation timelines must be extended, we keep complainants informed of progress on a regular basis.

Indicator Four: The outcome of complaints at each stage

The number of complaints upheld, partially upheld, not upheld and resolved at stage 1, stage 2 and after escalation as % of all complaints closed at stage 1, stage 2 and after escalation.

2025-26	**% Closed at Level 1**	**% Closed at Level 2**	**% Escalated L1 – L2**	**Number of Complaints**
Upheld	14	1	0	15
Part Upheld	9	5	0	14
Not Upheld	16	5	(1)	22
Resolved	6	2	(1)	8
Open	0	4*	(1*)	4
Number of Complaints	**45**	**17**	**(3)**	**62**

**Reported here although open complaints are not yet closed*

Complaints Trends and Resulting Actions

The following table summarises complaints to the college across time. With well over 6000 student enrolments at college in each academic year, it is evident that the number of complaints reflects a very small percentage of all interactions that students and other stakeholders have with the college.

Nonetheless, we take our responsibilities seriously and aim to deal with complaints promptly and to the complainant's satisfaction.

Number of Complaints						
	2020-21	**2021-22**	**2022-23**	**2023-24**	**2024-25**	**2025-26**
Total	46	58	61	52	50	62

Learning from Complaints – Annual Review of Reasons

The college actively participates in annual self-evaluation, so is always seeking to improve our services, proactively using feedback from students, customers and stakeholders.

Based on the complaints which were upheld or partly upheld, we note the following actions from the main categories of complaint and which improvement actions arose from these. Please note that in every case, complainants were either satisfied with the outcomes reached or in a few cases, were directed to SPSO to request an independent review of their cases and the outcomes of these will be reported once we hear back from SPSO.

Reason for Complaint	**Total No.**	**Upheld/ Part Upheld**	**Improvement Actions**
Communication	4	2	Feedback to individual or team provided, action taken to improve communication and recorded in self-evaluation.
Course Related	2	2	Manager involved in resolving so could action via self-evaluation.
Delivery staff actions	19	7	Coaching provided to individual staff.
Funding	0	0	
Management action	6	0	
College Estate	1	0	
Other	2	2	Appropriate action taken.
Standard of Service	11	4	Feedback to the individual or team provided, action taken to improve service and recorded in self-evaluation.
Student behaviour	14	10	Student behaviour is addressed where necessary through Student Positive Behaviour and Disciplinary Procedure.
Support staff behaviour	3	2	Coaching provided to individual staff.
Total	**62**	**29**	

Conclusion

The college follows the Scottish Public Sector Ombudsman Model Complaints Handling Policy and promotes awareness of this to staff, students and visitors. The number of complaints received by the college is low, and all were handled proactively and to complainant's satisfaction.

We use the information gathered during the complaints handling process to inform continuous improvement in real time, as well as reflecting on these for self-evaluation purposes.

From 2024-25 onwards, complaints were included in the college annual Self-Evaluation and Action Plan (SEAP) reporting to the Scottish Funding Council and from 2025-26, these were also reported as part of the Institution Led Quality Review (ILQR) systematically reviews all departmental performance over a six-year period.

The college largely promotes positive feedback on staff and the college from students and stakeholders, but we recognise the importance of learning from complaints, so also publish changes and improvements resulting from this learning on our website. We also publish reports and awards which recognise sector leading practice.